WRITING METHODS: MODELS OF LITERARY CREATION AND RECEPTION IN THE WORK OF CATERINA ALBERT I PARADÍS/VÍCTOR CATALÀ

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ABSTRACT

Kate Good: Writing Methods: Models of Literary Creation and Reception in the Work of Caterina Albert i Paradís/Víctor Català
(Under the direction of Samuel Amago)

This dissertation studies one of Catalonia's most influential writers, Caterina Albert i Paradís (pseudonym Víctor Català) (1869-1966), within the context of early-twentieth century Hispano-Catalan literary society. It demonstrates how, in a predominantly male profession, Albert/Català and contemporary female writers in Spain and Latin America become the subjects of critical gossip and face gender-based critical restriction of their creative work. In the literary reception of these writers, allusions to their deviant bodies, gender identities, and sexualities distract and detract from more rigorous formal assessments of their works. I argue that Albert/Català puts forth models of literary creation and methods of reception in her novels, short stories, and correspondence that function to defend her artistic liberty and to counter a culture of gendered critique. In this way, this dissertation shows how Albert's narrative methods of writing (and reading) worked to create a space for the creative expression of women writers in a rapidly modernizing nation. This research works to bridge the gap between Catalan and Spanish-language literature by calling attention to the contributions of a canonical author who remains—despite her many achievements—overlooked by critics in the Spanish and Anglo-American academies.

To my mom, for insisting that now was a good time for graduate school.

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NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

Few English translations of Víctor Català's work were available at the time of writing this dissertation. I have used—and in several instances modified—David H. Rosenthal's translation of *Solitud* in Chapter 1. The English titles of Català's short story collections, including *Dramas rurals, Contrallums, Caires vius*, and *Ombrívoles*, come from Kathleen McNerney ("No subject;" "Caterina Albert"). All other translations from Catalan to English are my own, unless otherwise noted.

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INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as shifting social and economic structures enable a growing number of women in Western Europe and the Americas to work as writers, there arises a tandem uptick in published criticism of their texts. In reviews of their works, many women authors—both during and after their writing careers—face invasive public speculation and commentary about their bodies, their gender expressions, and their sexualities. Although loosely camouflaged as analytical discussion of their literary production, such speculation draws attention away from their texts' literary merits by conflating their perceived value with suppositions about their authors' lifestyles and/or physical appearances. This method of reception works to fabricate what Rita Felksi calls "chains of causality," imaginary links between the work and, in this case, the woman that wrote it (*Limits* 67). As scholars including Susan Kirkpatrick, Begoña Sáez Martínez, Íñigo Sánchez-Llama, and Luisa Elena Delgado make evident, on many occasions critics read woman-authored texts as a limited function of the writer's personal life or semblance. Kirkpatrick, for instance, demonstrates that references to the life of French novelist George Sand (1804-1876) serve to discount the value of her work (88). Sáez Martínez reports similar findings regarding critical responses to the texts and life of Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885) (40-41). The use of irrelevant or non-literary information by a masculinist critical apparatus functions to control access to literary prestige, which remains male-gendered at that time.[1]

[1] See: Ana Pelufo and Maryellen Bieder ("Gender").

As a number of recent studies show, in the early decades of the twentieth century some Hispanic women authors make a place for themselves in a male-dominated and male-regulated profession by creating counter discourses that bring attention back to their works. Through the use of allegories, models, and/or symbols of creation and reception in their texts, women writers defend and authorize their writings and, consequently, their selves. Cathy L. Jrade demonstrates that the seductive poetry of Uruguayan Delmira Agustini (1886-1914) serves as a method by which the author can establish authority over the Other, or the male figure (most notably, Rubén Darío) that attempts to regulate her art and her creative process in general (*Delmira* 119). Agustini appropriates the figure of an independent Salome and the vampire to dispute symbolically what Jrade calls the "widespread vilification of independent, creative women" (*Delmira* 103). Agustini's Argentine contemporary Alfonsina Storni (1892-1938) promotes the work of women writers and their right to creative independence by employing irony, parody, and the occasional male pseudonym to "burlar las restricciones que enfrentaba la emisora femenina," according to Alicia Salomone (218).[2] Across the Atlantic, Caterina Albert i Paradís (1869-1966), better known by her pseudonym Víctor Català, outlines methods of creation and reception in her novels, short stories, and prologues.[3] Her writing methods, as this dissertation contends, center on the autonomy of the artist in light of both moral norms and cultural regulations that circumscribe artistic production in early twentieth-century Catalunya. In the public eye, Català does not present herself as an outspoken activist for feminist causes, as do her bolder Catalan contemporaries Dolors Montserdà (1845-1919) or Carme Karr (1865-1943). Nonetheless, her advocacy for creative freedom and the innate morality of well-made art, regardless of the genre

[2] On Storni, see also: (Méndez).

[3] Given that Víctor Català is Caterina Albert's chosen writerly identity and the primary name with which she publishes, I refer to the author by her pseudonym throughout this dissertation.

or theme,[4] serves to advance the cause of women authors by working to liberate them from the critical—and social—consequences of producing work deemed unladylike.

In what follows of this introduction, I first offer a brief overview of Català's role in Catalan literature. Because effective biographical sketches of Català exist elsewhere, rather than devote extensive space to tracing her life and work, I instead answer different questions — why Català? And why now?— by demonstrating that, despite her notoriety, significant gaps exist in research on her work and her contributions to women's writing culture.[5] Second, I outline this dissertation's primary argument and its methods of analysis, which are informed in part by metacritical approaches and theories of embodied deviance. Third, I survey the criticism that Català's works and those of some of her near-contemporaries receive, underscoring the use of gendered and suspicious methodologies in this reception. I propose that, in response, Català creates her own writing methods, which are both necessary and revolutionary in light of the male-dominated creative milieu of early twentieth-century Catalunya. Finally, I provide an overview of the structure and content of each chapter, including what writing methods they address, and describe my criteria for selection of works.

I. Víctor Català in Catalan Literature and Literary Criticism

Though she writes from a marginalized position, Català's contributions to Catalan literature in general and to Catalan modernism in particular are not up for debate amongst

[4] See: (Garcés, "Conversa" 1748).

[5] For a brief biography of Català, see (Bieder, "Albert") and (Vilarós).

scholars.[6] Brad Epps and Enric Sullà underscore Català's canonicity (Epps, "Solitud" 7; Sullà 4), while Kathleen McNerney calls her "the towering figure of the time" ("Recovering" 77). Along these same lines, Margarida Casacuberta recognizes Català as the emblematic author of the *novel·la modernista*, a form that signifies the rebirth of the Catalan novel after over a century of Spanish linguistic hegemony (236). Although prose in Catalan begins to reemerge earlier, in the mid- to late- nineteenth century, it is the art, architecture, and literature of Catalan *Modernisme* that marks a turning point for the region with regards to its development of a characteristic, cosmopolitan style (Jrade, "Modernism" 184, 186). To recognize Català as one of *Modernisme*'s most notable creators, then, is also to recognize her foundational role in Catalan letters. Evidencing the reach of her work, Català's novels and short stories catch the eye (and the pen) of the most prominent culture shapers of her era, including Narcís Oller and Joan Maragall. To put this accomplishment in context, these authors' recognition of her work could be likened to an English-language fiction writer garnering the attention of Henry James or Virginia Woolf. Furthermore, the reach and influence of Català's work extends to the generations of writers that follow her. One twenty-first-century scholar, Núria Nardi, asserts that one can trace a relationship between any *escriptora catalana* and the pioneering Català (86).

Notwithstanding Català's significant contributions to Catalan literature, an array of geo-linguistic boundaries has constrained research on her texts. The works of Català's near-contemporaries (including the aforementioned Agustini and Storni, and others such as Emilia Pardo Bazán [1851-1921] and Mercè Rodoreda [1908-1983]) have been the subjects of

[6] Maria Lluïsa Guardiola asserts that Català's voice serves an alternative to those of the dominant Catalan literary canon (12).

monographic studies in Spanish and/or English.[7] However, the sole book-length analysis of Català's texts—Francesca Bartrina's *Caterina Albert i Paradís / Víctor Català: La voluptuositat de l'escriptura* (*Caterina Albert i Paradís / Víctor Català: The Voluptuousness of Writing*)—is published in Catalunya and written in Catalan. Many articles and book chapters on Català follow this pattern. As Pilar V. Rotella states, outside of Catalan literary circles, the author enjoys relatively little renown ("Naturalism, Regionalism" 134). A dearth of available translations of Català's texts exacerbates her linguistic sequestration. Almost all essays written in English or Spanish on Català include Catalan-language sources, which is to say reading knowledge of her native language remains all but required for research. As a result, there exists a sizeable gap between the predominantly Catalan-language scholarship on Català and the predominantly English- and Spanish-language scholarship on her Hispanic female contemporaries. Kathleen McNerney's newly published English translations of a selection of short stories, titled *Silent Souls and Other Stories*, may help promote study of Català's work. In any case, Català's contributions to twentieth-century women's writing culture and to Hispanic letters remain to be fully acknowledged by the Anglo-American academy.

In recent years, for reasons associated with Català's literary legacy in particular and renewed cultural attention to issues of gender equality in general, the author's work has begun to reach new audiences. Club Editor's 2015 re-publication of *Un film (3.000 metres)* enjoyed runaway success as one of the top five books sold during that year's Sant Jordi festivities ("Sant Jordi"). In 2016, Català remained in the spotlight when the *Institut de lletres catalanes* promoted *L'any Víctor Català* (*The Year of Víctor Català*). With new editions of all of her works slated to

[7] On Emilia Pardo Bazán, see, for instance, (Tolliver, *Cigar Smoke*) and (Quesada Novas). On Mercè Rodoreda, see: (Arkinstall).

be published in 2018 and 2019 (Nopca), Català's extensive oeuvre is poised to attract the type of public and academic interest that her Hispanic contemporaries have enjoyed. At a time when the need for gender equality at all levels of society has reemerged in national debate, a clear understanding of the writing methods inherent in Català's work allows us to evaluate the mechanisms by which one sex has been able to fashion and defend boundaries of cultural prestige (and economic potential) by promoting perceptions of the deviance and/or marginality of those that contest them.

II. *Writing Methods*, in a Nutshell

This dissertation situates Català and her works in the context of early twentieth-century Hispano-Catalan literary society in order to promote a view of women's writing culture that transcends strict national or linguistic borders. It examines the gendered methodologies present in a subset of Català's literary reception, along with the various stylistic, thematic, and linguistic restrictions imposed—explicitly or tacitly—on her creative work. In response to these limitations, I argue that Català puts forth narrative methods of writing and reading in her novels *Solitud* (*Solitud*) (1904/1905) and *Un film (3.000 metres)* (*A film [3.000 meters]*) (1918-1920), in her short stories "L'Embruix" ("The Curse") (1930), "Carnestoltes" ("Carnival") (1907), and "L'altra vida" ("The Other Life") (1930), in a number of her prologues and personal letters, and in one postscript. In these works, I find models of literary creation and reception that function to defend her artistic liberty and counter a culture of gendered critique.

In order to examine the forces that certain modes of critical discourse exert on women writers, this dissertation incorporates meta-critical theories and analyses from scholars such as Maryellen Bieder and Constance A. Sullivan—as well as the aforementioned Felski and

Kirkpatrick. In turn, it considers the diverse functions of Català's fictional narratives, which serve to portray nosy critical inquiries, allegorize creative rebellion, and model recognition between the socially marginalized and others in their surroundings.

My analysis takes into account how narrative configures, highlights, and remedies Otherness by studying symbolic representations of deviance and difference in Català's works, including those related to gender and sexuality, class, and disability status. My close readings of Català's works draw from Akiko Tsuchiya's examination of marginal subjects, Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline L. Urla 's concept of "embodied deviance" (2), Pierre Bourdieu's problematization of class and taste, and David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's work on "narrative prosthesis" (6). I use these diverse theoretical lenses to bring into focus how, in both Català's fictional narratives and non-fictional texts, concepts surrounding identity construction become enmeshed in questions of creative work and authorship.

III. Gender and Suspicion in the Criticism of Women-Authored Texts

At the turn of the twentieth century, as women begin to gain market share as readers and writers, critics become increasingly preoccupied with how to deal with their influence and especially the challenge it poses to traditional gender hierarchies. It is, by now, well understood that many nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary reviewers manage the growing presence of women by reaffirming the inherent masculinity of creative professions. For lack of better language to describe the intellectual potential of women or for deeply held beliefs regarding the role of women in society, good writing by Hispanic *autoras* has long been considered to be *varonil*. Maryellen Bieder calls this method of reading "cross-gendered" in that it labels the critic's perception of innovative form and/or content as masculine writing, even though a woman

writer produced the text ("Gender" 103). What interests me in particular about cross-gendered readings are the instances in which *varonil* loses its metaphorical valences and takes on literal ones, as seen through the instances in which critics support their conclusions regarding the "masculinity" of the female-authored text by masculinizing (or de-feminizing) the body that wrote it.[8] In other words, critics use the perceived effects of a text to create an interpretation that centers on an imagined and irrelevant backstory about the gender identity or sexuality of women authors. As a result, this approach falls under the umbrella of so-called deep, symptomatic, and/or suspicious readings. While the theorists that employ these terms tend to favor one over another (for Felski, it is "suspicious;" for Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, it is "deep"), they are often used interchangeably to connote similar basic ideas: that what a text means and what it says are different, that the meaning of a text must be meticulously deciphered and revealed by a trained eye, and that this method is necessarily rigorous. However, these approaches lend themselves to reinforcing problematic linkages between authors and their texts.

Parallel to how finisecular literary critics distinguish the fictional works of women authors in terms of the texts' perceived masculinity—usually, its intellectuality or pith—or femininity—its sentimentality or pettiness—, theorists also imagine certain approaches to critique in gendered terms. Frederic Jameson, in a tone betraying no irony, associates deep reading with strength (60), domination (61), and "a Homeric battlefield" (13), which serves to masculinize both its efforts and its concomitant cachet. Felksi adds that the symptomatic approach is presumed to be "macho" and "muscular" (*Limits* 11). For their part, Best and Marcus link it to illusions of power and heroism (1, 5), as well as to "an extreme degree of penetration"

[8] For my purposes here, I use "masculinity" to refer to traits (physical, psychological, intellectual, etcetera) associated with men at the cultural moment in question, and "femininity" to refer to those of women, an approach inspired by Constance A. Sullivan (26).

(4). If good writing is once conceived as a *varonil* art, it would now appear that sound, scrupulous criticism is also male-gendered. Yet suspicious reading creates an additional burden for women authors, who must repeatedly defend not only their writing but also their personal life choices in order to avoid or to remedy social and cultural ostracization and to achieve recognition based on literary merit.

Alternatives to deep reading, on the other hand, have been imagined as stemming from the opposite end of a male-female binary. The practice of so-called surface reading, for instance, has prompted some polemic. In visual metaphors, it is said to look at rather than through texts (Best and Marcus 9) or in front of, rather than behind (Felski, *Limits* 12), which is to say that this approach theorizes effects more than causes. Best and Marcus cite that Jameson considers surface reading to be the work of "ideologically complicit" and otherwise "weak" literary interpreters (5). In this language, tired gendered patterns of talking about readers are plainly manifest. It recalls that used to frame the approach of the first generation of Hispanic women reading en masse, allegedly "naïve" (Tsuchiya 97) and "unthinking" consumers (Charnon-Deutsch 43) who fail to create critical distance between their selves and the novels in their hands. Nonetheless, surface reading becomes a consequential approach to the works of women authors in general, and to Català's in particular, in that it remedies a persistent tendency to draw unnecessary attention to their bodies, gender expression, or sexuality in lieu of analyzing their texts.

Finisecular male critics have a lot to say about women who create. Across their published reviews, commentary linking the intellectual work of women with their physical undesirability emerges as a repeated trope. Letters penned by Leopoldo Alas (pseudonym Clarín) circa 1879 reinforce the myth that beauty and intelligence cannot coexist by claiming that literate women

use their writing as an attempt to compensate for their unattractiveness (Sáez Martínez 42). Just over a decade later, another author, Juan Valera, writes a letter in which he names Emilia Pardo Bazán as an instigator of the movement for women to be admitted to literary *Academias*. Valera calls Pardo Bazán a "sandía con patas" (Lemartinel 459, qtd. in Sáez Martínez 36), his negative commentary on her appearance diminishing the authority Pardo Bazán could gain by making room for herself in a prestigious cultural institution. Although the epistolary form of Alas and Valera's notes offers only private commentary on these women writers, leaving room to imagine that they may be treated with more tact in public, this attitude is nonetheless widespread. There exists an array of published statements to the same effect, which sometimes appear in surprising places. In a 1911 prologue to *Oasis de Arte*, a travelogue by the Peruvian Zoila Aurora Cáceres, Ruben Darío expresses—with little restraint—his general distaste for "las plumíferas" (VII). In this text, Darío labels women writers "casos de una teratología moral" (VII), affirming that the reason he dislikes the works of these moral monstrosities is "'posiblemente o seguramente porque todas con ciertas raras excepciones, han sido y son feas'" (VII-VIII). In a 1938 review published in the magazine *Nosotros*, Roberto Giusti writes of Alfonsina Storni: "La conocisteis: no era hermosa, aunque la transfiguraba el don de simpatía que de ella irradiaba" (373). Implicit in these critiques is that the body of the female writer somehow deviates from culturally

desirable standards of appearance.[9] By insulting their physical form, male critics reassert their superiority over women writers, who might otherwise threaten their status.[10]

This reading of the bodies of women in positions of creative or cultural authority is not necessarily limited by the critic's gender, though, nor is it absent in discourses appearing over a century later. For example, in 2002, Hispanist Patricia Varas ascribes devious intention to what appear to be the normal effects of aging on Agustini's body. Varas proposes that the author "literally reshaped her body in order to challenge social norms," which led her from being a beautiful and curvaceous young woman to something less than that as an adult (152). In other words, the female physique becomes less feminine as a measure of its reflection or representation of rebellious styles of writing. Outside of literary or academic discourse, talk of women's figures continues to serve as a way to detract from their professional reputation. It is not difficult to imagine Darío as a twenty-first-century politician armed with misogyny and a Twitter handle, or Giusti as a television executive who claims that a certain female reporter is credible and intelligent, though not quite attractive enough. Although perceptions of beauty often relate to some aesthetic standards of symmetry or proportionality, such language shows that beauty fundamentally functions as a constructed and subjective measure of social regulation for women.[11]

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[9] The alternative, women authors considered attractive, has other implications, serving to turn them into fetishized objects rather than intellectual subjects. In the case of the writer Cristina Peri Rossi, for instance, Christine Henseler demonstrates that commentary on Peri Rossi's legs serves to "undermine the authority of her text" (12). Furthermore, Laura Freixas notes the inherent emptiness of the critique of women authors who make waves because their image is more "llamativa" (37).

[10] See, for instance, Néstor Luján, who denigrates the looks of his colleague Laforet, who had achieved considerable renown after the publication of *Nada* in 1945 (217).

[11] See: (Wolf).

The same behavioral norms that color the aforementioned descriptions of female beauty (or lack thereof) also operate to shape scientific and medical discourses in a way that reinforces the hegemonic position of men as creators. Critics suggest that women authors not only write like men, but they almost are men. For instance, on the occasion of the publication of Agustini's *Poesías completas* in 1944, Alberto Zum Felde writes an accompanying prologue that addresses, with some ambiguity, masculinist narratives surrounding the possible creative capacities of women. Zum Felde appears conflicted about how to define Agustini's poetry because of both linguistic and scientific limitations:

> La palabra "virilidad" parece, en este caso, dura y paradojal; pero, en verdad, no se halla otra, en nuestro limitado lenguaje de definiciones, para significar esa facultad suya de abstracción mental, y esa misma energía de expresiones que tiene a veces, propia de la mentalidad varonil; porque, las dos maneras de abstracción intelectual, la metafísica y la matemática, son característicamente masculinas; y cuando se dan, muy raramente, en la mujer, corresponden a un temperamento sin femineidad, a una masculinización del carácter. Un moderno endocrinologista nos remitiría en seguida a un problema de glándulas.
>
> Pero Delmira Agustini—para desesperación de los exegetas glandulares—y criatura realmente excepcional en todo, aúna la facultad varonil de abstracción mental a la más honda femineidad de temperamento; su estro domina tanto la pura emotividad como el pensamiento puro, y su poesía va desde la más ardua idea metafísica a la voluptuosidad más enervante.

Zum Felde's analysis brings to the fore the gendered boxes of intellectual traits that exist in his cultural milieu. In order to underscore the exceptionality of Agustini's "honda femineidad," he

alludes to medical discourses that describe creative work in women as if it were a leaky hormonal faucet of masculinity. By classifying her creative impulse as *estro*, Zum Felde reframes Agustini's male-gendered creative capacities in more feminine terms. He links them to female mammals in heat, which is to say at the height of their reproductive capacity, the primary type of "creation" allowed women of the era. Ultimately, Zum Felde grants Agustini her femininity as an exception to the rule, and as such, his analysis fails to reframe the assumed inferiority of the female creative mind.

Similar to Agustini, Català also becomes subject to masculinizing critical assessments. In his biography of the author, Josep Miracle concludes that Català's male penname arises from a subconscious desire and chromosomal predisposition to be a man (*Caterina* 11, 100). While speaking to a newspaper reporter, Miracle emphasizes his belief that, "Hagués hagut de néixer home i no pas dona" (Fargas) ("She should have been born a man and not a woman"). These pseudo-biographical readings of Català's psyche overlook the far more obvious social and cultural privileges that a male nom de plume grants women writers. Miracle's analysis employs a suspicious approach as it moves from the effects of fictional text to the reconstruction of an unsupported and irrelevant non-fictional cause, which points to how the critically imagined body of the woman author bears the masculinizing mark of her work. In the case of both Zum Felde and Miracle, confirmation bias is at work as deeply engrained gendered beliefs about the superior intellectual capacities of men prompt the conclusion that women who write must be mannish, rather than lead to a reconsideration of the innate abilities of both men and women.

Aside from the suggestion of an external or internal lack of femininity, the reproduction or formulation of tales about women authors' sexualities serves as a third distracting approach to their work. In some instances, these commentaries operate like the game "Telephone," in which

participants pass on a message that they heard somewhere else, which causes that message to become distorted and/or decontextualized. For instance, Raúl Silva Castro, referencing an earlier work by Eduardo Solar Correa, asserts in his 1935 biographical introduction that Gabriela Mistral both writes with a masculine harshness and expresses her love with "un carácter de hombre" (16). This assessment leads to the assumption that ostensibly masculine behavior in one realm (namely, professional writing) implies masculinity in other unrelated realms. While notes on an author's personal life indeed suit the work of a biographer, Solar Correa's and consequently Silva Castro's extrapolation remains misguided because it is founded on the same gender stereotypes that lead other critics to assert, "she should have been born a man." Ultimately, this approach detracts from Mistral's recognition as a professional woman writer.

In other studies, critics make similar remarks regarding the personal lives of women authors, but fail to identify any sources at all. Emir Rodríguez Monegal, writing on Delmira Agustini in 1969, claims that "Los más procaces se imaginaban cosas y llegaban a insinuar hasta su lesbianismo, apoyados tal vez en esos ardientes retratos de mujeres que publicó en *La Alborada* hacia 1903" (51). Rodríguez Monegal offers a reasonable explanation for the gossipy chatter that surrounds Agustini, yet the lack of citations along with the qualifier "tal vez" diminishes the ability of his report to effectively refute the *voces procaces* of which he speaks. A 2012 biography of Alfonsina Storni by Josefina Delgado repeats this pattern, noting that "algunos hablan de" Storni's supposed homosexuality, but that such determinations may stem from the fact that the author operates outside of societal norms (265).[12] Despite the attempt at contextualization, the lack of named sources in both Monegal and Delgado's texts serves to mimic and perpetuate the gossipy discourse that their texts otherwise contest. Gabriel Ferrater

[12] Licia Fiol-Matta's 1995 reading of Mistral reaches similar conclusions (201-202).

also refers to unsubstantiated claims on Català's personal life in a mid-1960s public lecture on her novel *Solitud.* Ferrater asserts, "Ara bé. Em penso que a hores d'ara ja es pot parlar francament i la veritat és que Caterina Albert era homosexual" (84) ("Well, I think that by now one can speak frankly and the truth is that Caterina Albert was homosexual"). Ferrater's use of "a hores d'ara" ("by now") situates his lecture in an imagined, modern space in which it need not be shameful to mention Català's non-heteronormative sexuality, for one because the author is now deceased. Given that the Franco-era Spanish state continued to be an unwelcome space for lesbian women (and gay men), this assumption regarding Català's *vida sentimental* not only sidetracks his literary analysis, but also signals Català's difference. Using deep readings of their bodies or their sexualities, critics repeatedly assert that nineteenth- and twentieth-century Hispanic women authors fall outside the bounds of what was considered to be "normal" [physically attractive, feminine, heterosexual].

In commentary on Català's work by her female contemporaries, a new pattern of dialogic engagement and transparency emerges. In many cases, women respond to Català's work in letters, a form whose personal nature resists suspicious commentary. Matilde Ras, Blanca de los Ríos, Concha Espina and others correspond with Català and their epistolary relationships make visible a support network among early twentieth-century women writers that extends across Spain.[13] Some published reviews by women writers even mimic the conversational form of correspondence or emphasize the reporter's familiarity and closeness with the author. De los Ríos, for instance, refutes an earlier review by R.D. Perés in which he describes Català as "una mujer de educación masculina, endurecida, virilizada casi por la libre atmósfera del campo" ("Dramas rurals" 293). In her response, de los Ríos undertakes the dual task of affirming the

[13] On Català's epistolary relations, see: (Ribera Llopis, *Projecció i recepció* 115-131; Nardi).

work and the author's gender conformity (a common occurrence in women-authored reviews of the day)[14] declaring,"Esta última observación, relativa á la personalidad de la escritora, evidencia que el Sr. Perés no conocía á la archisimpática y muy femenina novelista" ("Víctor Català, por Blanca" 166). De los Ríos deauthorizes Perés's assertions about Català by affirming that he does not know her and, in turn, drawing attention to her own relationship with the author.

In contrast to earlier male-authored newspaper articles on Català, Matilde Ras's 1928 article and Ana María Martínez-Sagi's published interview include photos of Català, which eliminates speculation about the physical traits of the author. (Aside from a brief mention of Català's prematurely gray hair on the part of Ras, these articles avoid commentary on Català's physique or gender expression.) Martínez-Sagi appears herself in a photo with Català, supposedly "conversant," or conversing with the author (Illustration 1). The photo appears staged; both women have their mouths closed (and thus cannot be talking). Nonetheless, the image authorizes Martínez-Sagi's in-person meeting with Català. The illusion of visual transparency that this snapshot creates is reinforced by Martínez-Sagi's use of Català's given name, Caterina Albert, instead of her pseudonym and her assertion that "Tota ella és com un gran espill prodigiosament clar, com un llac de transparència viva, com un matí de maig lluminós i radiant i encès de sol" (12) ("She is like a great mirror, prodigiously bright, like an intensely transparent lake, like a May morning, luminous, radiant, and sunlit"). By underscoring Català's sincerity and brightness, Martínez-Sagi's text counters assumptions about Català's purportedly "shadowy" nature.

Although women-authored reviews, such as those from de los Ríos and Martínez-Sagi, employ strategies to demystify Català, male reviewers maintain a disproportionately large role in

[14] See: (Simon Palmer 42).

fashioning her public image because published reception of her works by women remains uncommon during her lifetime, an idea I revisit in chapter three. Ultimately, the commercial nature of print media rewards sensationalist stories and suspicious tones. Mystery sells because, as Rita Felski asserts, it renders "reality newly gripping and worthy of attention" (*Limits* 99). Yet this gender-based suspicious reading has had several lasting effects on the interpretation of early twentieth-century Hispanic women writers: it has downplayed the capacity of women writers to produce good literature as women, it has altered public and critical perceptions of their bodies, and it has invented and promoted unproven claims about their sexuality, all of which leads to misguided—not to mention distracting—interpretations of their work. These women respond, on a meta-literary level, in order to defend their work (and really, their selves). In the case of Català, I call these responses her writing methods, which are the subject of the following chapters of this dissertation.

IV. Structure, Content, and Criteria

The four chapters of this dissertation illustrate how a variety of gendered criticism of different kinds arrives at Català's literary doorstep; they analyze the author's actions to control, negate, reframe or evade it. Each chapter examines a variety of Català's texts in terms of their representation of writing methods. The chapters are linked by three main elements: an evaluation of critical discourses on Català/her works, a close reading of Català's non-fictional texts that specifically address the work and roles of a writer-creator, and analyses of a novel or short story that models methods of literary creation and reception. The criticism to which I refer spans the entirety of Català's writing career (~1898 to ~ 1951) and into the present day. Cognizant of the diversity of form and content across Català's oeuvre (theatre, poetry, plastic arts, short stories,

etc.), I have restricted my selection to works of her long and short fiction from between 1898 and 1930. This choice does not mean to imply that other works by Català could not be read to similar ends, or, alternatively, that all of her works could. My aim is for the texts examined in this dissertation to be representative rather than exhaustive.

Chapter one argues that Català assumes a strategically feminized persona as one response to the gendered suspicious criticism that she receives. My analysis of the private correspondence she maintains in the years following the release of the monologue "La infanticida" [*The Infanticide*] (1898) and her first short story collections (*Drames Rurals* [*Rural Dramas*] [1902] and *Ombrívoles* [*Somber Shades*] [1904]) brings to light several techniques of literary creation and reception that Català employs. These methods serve to confront accusations that the writer or her work could be considered masculine or gender deviant. At the same time, these non-fiction texts draw attention to Català's proto-feminist advocacy by underscoring her professionalism as a woman writer and expressing her opposition to limited and limiting views of such. Along these lines, I read Català's first novel, *Solitud* (1904/1905), as a text that models her methods of literary creation and reception through its depictions of storytelling, women's work, and gossip, all of which signal the transformative power of narrative.

In chapter two, I examine Català's second (and final) novel, *Un film (3.000 metres)*, alongside a postscript and a selection of her correspondence. The novel raised critical eyebrows in its days for its unconventional hybridization of cinematic, folletinesque, and Realist elements. In theme and form, *Un film* evokes an obsessive pursuit of personal liberty as its orphaned protagonist, Nonat, skillfully shirks both social norms and national laws. In order to contest strict *Noucentista* ideals of artistic propriety, the novel makes use of non-normative Catalan and mass cultural genres. It also challenges other forms of order, including the idealized division of urban

socioeconomic classes, by turning the city's socioeconomically stratified recreational spaces into theatrical stages for Nonat. As the protagonist enters these spaces through his deft imitations of the wealthy, his actions complicate seemingly objective standards of class, of gender, and of taste. Taken as a whole, the novel reaffirms Català's capacity to write and to self-fashion freely in an environment of carefully managed creative output.

Aside from her novelistic output, Català is equally recognized for being a prolific producer of short stories. In chapter three, I evaluate a subset of Català's literary reception on the basis of the visual methods and metaphors that it employs. I show that these metaphors serve to replicate a male [critical] gaze on a female body [of work], which reinforces an understanding of the lives, bodies, and texts of female authors as co-implicated. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that Català's prologue "Pòrtic" ("Portico") (1907) and short story "L'Embruix" ("The Curse") (1930) thwart this critical gaze by portraying blindness and ignorance.[15] As these texts shift attention from the perceived flaws of Català's works to the faults of an inexperienced public, they symbolically censure the judgments of her misguided—and overly moralistic—readership. (There is some irony in that arguing for creative freedom means that, in some ways, Català puts a check on the interpretive freedom of her critics, though that is an argument for another day.)

If chapter three puts forth a negative ethics of reception (or what not to do as a literary critic), chapter four provides its complement (what to do as a critic). Here, I elaborate on the idea that Català's critics construct her alterity based on the alleged masculinity of both her gender expression and her use of dark themes. I assert that Català's prologues respond to such critique by defending the aesthetic value of her ostensibly atypical artistic choices. In conjunction with

[15] "Pòrtic" ("Portico") is the prologue to the short story collection *Caires vius* (*Sharp Edges*). It is the longest and most detailed of Català's prologues by significant measure.

the defense put forth in these prologues, this chapter contends that Català's short stories, "Carnestoltes" ("Carnival") (1907) and "L'altra vida" ("The Other Life") (1930) center on an understanding, acceptance, and even appreciation of diversity. By portraying disability and non-normative gender/sexuality, these stories draw attention to the protagonists' embodied Otherness and the construction of narratives surrounding their difference. The tragic denouement of both stories brings into focus the still-limited possibilities for meaningful acceptance of certain persons and the literary themes, writers, and styles that they represent.

In the conclusion, I revisit Felski's reconsiderations of the role of critique and offer a brief answer to her question: "How can texts that are inert in one historical moment become newly revealing, eye-opening, even life-transforming, in another?" (*Limits* 155). I demonstrate some ways that Català's writing methods contributes to our understanding of how and why contemporary female authors remain subject to invasive and irrelevant inquiries, as well as to miscategorizations of their creative fictional work. Finally, I suggest avenues for future research on Català and other early twentieth-century Hispanic writers.

ILLUSTRATION 1: "Our writer Anna Mª Martínez conversing with Caterina Albert, 'Víctor Català.'" (Martínez-Sagi 12)

La nostra redactora Anna M.ª Martínez conversant amb Caterina Albert, "Víctor Català". (Foto Cases.)

CHAPTER 1: FINISECULAR CATALAN LITERARY CULTURE AND MODELS OF CREATION AND RECEPTION IN *SOLITUD*

The rapid, if fitful, arrival of modernity in the fin-de-siècle Iberian Peninsula ushers in new modes of production and consumption that prompt shifts in gender and class roles. In Catalunya, these social changes clash with the nation-building ideals of conservative ruling classes. As women enter the public sphere in larger numbers, there reemerge traditional discourses extolling their roles and duties as wives and mothers, such as Eugeni D'Ors's novel-cum-philosophical treatise, *La Ben Plantada* (*The Well-Planted Woman*) (1911). As mentioned in the introduction, social tensions regarding the changing role of women during the early twentieth-century coalesce in invasive and suspicious critical reactions to women writers' texts. As one of the first female authors to gain a foothold in Catalan literary circles and markets, Víctor Català uses her reflexive commentary on the roles of creative writers and critics to help make space for herself in an otherwise exclusionary patriarchal environment.

The first section of this chapter proposes that, in the wake of the public scandal that resulted from the submission of a polemical monologue to the *Jocs Florals d'Olot* (Floral Games of Olot), Català outlines methods of literary creation and reception in several non-fictional texts—including private correspondence and a published interview. The writing methods that emerge post-*Jocs* serve to counter intrusive speculation about her transgressive behavior, strategically feminize her, and voice opposition to limited and limiting views of women authors. The chapter's second section argues that Català's first novel, *Solitud* (1904/1905), reinforces the

development of these methods and supports their functioning through its symbolic depictions of storytelling, creative women's work, and gossip.

I. The Role of the *Jocs Florals* in the Development of Català's Writing Methods

The discriminatory treatment Català receives after the first major public exhibition of her work, the 1898 celebration of the *Jocs Florals d'Olot* (Floral Games of Olot), provides a significant impulse for the development of her methods of literary creation and reception. At various points in her career, Català references—directly and indirectly—the events that transpired during and after the *Jocs*, evidencing their lasting impact on her conception of the role of creative writers and their critics. This section analyzes several texts in which Català responds to the *Jocs Florals,* including letters to colleagues and editors as well as a published interview, to show how they work to strategically feminize the author, to call out the public's prejudiced perception of women writers, and to explain the consequences of her notoriety.

Originally instituted in Barcelona, the *Jocs Florals* serve as a platform to motivate new Catalan literary production in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.[16] The *Jocs* aspire to bring about a modern, Catalan "literatura mascle" ("masculine literature"), which is to say a literature that is strong, authentic, and devoid of excessive sentimentalism (Casacuberta i Rius 38). The gendered terms used to describe the desired product also signal those who are anticipated to be its creators: men. For this reason, Català's submission of her dramatic

[16] The *Jocs* of Olot emerge as an offshoot of the Barcelona Floral Games. For a historical overview of the *Jocs*, see: (Casacuberta i Rius).

monologue, "La infanticida," polarizes the public at the 1898 *Jocs Florals d'Olot*.[17] The dark theme confounds judges Marià Vayreda and Josep Berga i Boada. Vayreda lauds the monologue for its hair-raising realism; on the other hand, Berga i Boada suggests that it needs to be modified "no sols per no atacar la moral sinó al bon gust (i bones costums)" (qtd. in Casacuberta and Rius 37, 37 n100) ("not only not to attack morality, but also good taste [and good manners]"). Although the style and intensity of the work impress these men, they remain encumbered by their commitment to the production of what they consider to be morally sound texts—especially considering that the author is not a man and thus lacks the creative privileges bestowed on male writers. Despite her work's literary merit, Català never claims her first place prize because of the conflicting publicity "La infanticida" receives, a concrete example of the way that one prominent cultural institution impedes the full participation and recognition of women authors at the turn of the twentieth century. Català's choice to avoid the awards ceremony and to write under a male pseudonym following this commotion demonstrates how she begins to use non-appearance, both physical and symbolic, as a way to avert social censure and personal embarrassment.

Although she does not publicly address the outcome of the *Jocs* until years later, in the more immediate aftermath Català feminizes herself and her work as a way to manage the critique she faced. For one, Català repeatedly affirms the precedence of her role as a stay-at-home caregiver. In a letter to her editor Francesc Matheu, dated December 26, 1902, Català rejects the opportunity to work on another project on the grounds that it would take her away from her domestic responsibilities, affirming, "Molt, molt m'agradaria acceptar l'oferiment que'm fa de col·laborar […] però no puch comprométrermi desde'l moment que no tinc la seguretat de poder

[17] "La infanticida" centers on a young woman who is forced to kill her child born out of wedlock before her father finds out and takes a certain and fatal retribution. For analyses of the work, see Francesca Bartrina (*Voluptuositat* 300) and Mercè Otero Vidal.

complir. Per una dona, l'escriurer es un entreteniment que forçosament ha d'anar després de les feynas casolanas" ("5. Caterina Albert" 131) ("It would please me very much to accept the offer to collaborate that you've made me […] but I can't commit myself since I am not sure that I will be able to fulfill [the required duties]. For a lady, writing is entertainment that necessarily must come after housework"). Català demonstrates her understanding of the behavioral expectations for women by affirming that her outside professional interests are not allowed to come before household duties. By following the remarks on her personal experience with a broad statement on women's writing in general, Català's letter stresses the relative disadvantage faced by female authors who are not freed of their familial obligations because of their interest in literature. Furthermore, because writing can only be "entertainment," it cannot readily serve as a method to achieve independence—financial or otherwise.[18] With strategic double-voicing, Català's letter both laments the unequal conditions faced by female writers and reassures those anxious about the growing autonomy of women.[19] In this way, the reference to her non-abandonment of her role as a "dona de sa casa" serves as a response to accusations that women's work outside of the home would be detrimental to society.

In other letters, Català feminizes not herself but rather her writing by depicting it as an emotional exercise—and thus, more appropriate for women to pursue. In a February 1903 letter to Joan Maragall, Català frames writing as a medicinally soothing exercise: "Lo treball literari és,

[18] In that Català comes from an upper-class family, she has the freedom to write without an immediate need to gain material benefit from her writing, which is not the case for all women writers (Alvarado 30).

[19] On another occasion, Català more clearly laments that her sex has cost her opportunities. In a February 1903 letter to Joan Maragall, Català muses that she would have been able to do more for herself, in terms of her professional formation, if she had had "lo temps lliure d'angoixes i de quefers ben diferents dels literaris i, sobretot, si hagués tingut la llibertat d'un home" ("A Joan Maragall, 5" 1789) ("the time free of anxieties and the chores quite different than literary ones, and above all, if I'd had the freedom of a man").

en efecte, per a mi un derivatiu, un conhort i una salvació" ("A Joan Maragall, 5" 1789) ("Literary work is, in effect, for me a palliative, a comfort, and a salvation"). Català affirms that she will pursue writing only once other—notably feminine—activities have lost interest, "en moments en què el treball manual o les converses inútils resultaven poc absorbents i s'havia de menester lo rosec perfidiós [sic] i viu del crear per a distraure una mica al pensament d'altres rosecs més constants i destructors" ("A Joan Maragall, 5" 1789) ("in moments in which manual labors and useless conversations are un-captivating and one finds the perfidious and intense gnawing of creating necessary to distract the mind a little from other more constant and destructive gnawing"). The pettiness of the "occupations" that women are allowed—needlework and chitchat—serve as an insufficient outlet for expression and a source of Català's critique throughout her career.[20] On the other hand, Català explains that writing appropriately channels energies that are otherwise unproductive or even harmful. Yet, instead of calling it an intellectual outlet, Català describes her need to create as a "gnawing." In this way, the author compares her creative impulse to hunger, an instinctual drive that cannot be denied.

An additional strategy that Català uses to evade finger wagging is to paint herself as a recreational writer who remains reclusive, two traits that again position her in the private/feminine sphere. In a second letter to Maragall*,* Català insists that she was not so bold as to submit her work to public critique at the *Jocs Florals* without being obliged to do so by another: "No per iniciativa pròpia, sinó per instigacions alienes i per circumstàncies especials que fóra llarg contar, anaren al públic mes primeres ratlles—modest esbarjo de persona reclosa que mai havia somniat amb nomenades literàries—, i de llavors ençà he passat de sorpresa en sorpresa" ("A Joan Maragall, 2" 1786) ("Not on my own initiative, but rather at the instigation of

[20] Chapters 2 and 4 of this dissertation will address other works that critique this same issue.

others and due to special circumstances that would be too much to recount, did my first lines—a modest recreation of a reclusive person who had never dreamed of literary recognition— become public, and from then on it has been surprise after surprise").[21] This letter represents Català as modest to the point of timidity, and utterly confounded by the publicity and recognition that her work could have garnered. Through this performance of astonishment, Català distances herself from what would be considered masculine methods of and motives for writing: she shows disinterest in fame and success, in financial gain or independence, and in writing as anything more than a distracting, leisure-time pursuit. The letter thus fabricates a scenario in which it is acceptable for her to continue her work.[22] Nevertheless, Català's correspondence with editors, and even Maragall, demonstrates her desire for a good reputation, her awareness of earnings from book sales, and her anxiety about writing to editorial deadlines.[23] The gap between Català's assertions of domesticity in letters to Maragall and her demonstrated understanding of professional obligations in letters to Matheu points to Català's careful management of her public image and persona.

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[21] This letter is not dated, but based on context and on similar content to a January 1903 letter, the compilers of Català's *Obres completes* estimate it to be from around this time.

[22] Català's self-defense resembles that of Spanish Romantic predecessors and other female contemporaries who devise excuses in order to be able to continue with their creative pursuits. For instance, Joyce Tolliver demonstrates that María del Pilar Sinués makes a show of her domesticity in order to distract from her literary work (*Cigar Smoke* 178 n17). According to Catherine Davies, Cecilia Böhl de Faber insists that she only begins to publish her novels as a last resort to escape poverty (but certainly not to climb the class ladder) (43). Català, too, avoids making a public show of herself. She shares with her female contemporaries a tendency to downplay a desire for success. Instead, these women strategically feminize both themselves and their work in order to deflect [male] anxieties regarding the professionalization of women authors and the potential consequences for the home (in their absence) and the public realm (in their presence). Maryellen Bieder notes that considering this context, it is unusual that Emilia Pardo Bazán (a near-contemporary of Català) openly claims her achievements ("Emilia" 21).

[23] See, for example: (Vía 29; Català, "23. Caterina Albert" 149; Català, "33. Caterina Albert" 158-59; Català, "A Joan Maragall, 8" 1794).

In the years following the *Jocs florals*, Català's letters not only feminize the author and her works, but also draw attention to the public's negative esteem of female authors, who are closely scrutinized because their work is perceived to be unbecoming of a lady. In an April 1903 letter to Matheu, Català explains why she plans to keep using the pseudonym that she created in the aftermath of the *Jocs*:

> Ja sé que la flaquesa d'escriure no és cap pecat [...] Peró la gran multitud ineducada i grollera, á la dona qu'escriu, la despulla desseguida de la qualitat de dona de sa casa (que à mi m'agrada tant) y la converteix en una mena de gallimarsot ò d'amassona; en una mena de ser estrany, que tira contra la corrent y'l sentit comú: y, francament, com trovo que no val la pena de sometres al judici d'aqueixa multitut plena d'estúpids prejudicis, desitjo conserver l'anónim pera lliurarme d'ella. ("10. Caterina Albert" 137).
>
> (I know that the weakness of writing is no sin [...]. But the uneducated and unwashed masses immediately strip the woman who writes of the quality of a woman of the home [that I like so much] and converts her into a type of butch or amazon; into a type of strange being, that goes against the mainstream and common sense. And, frankly, since I find that it is not worth it to submit oneself to such a stupidly prejudiced crowd, I wish to keep my anonymity to free myself of them.)

Català describes how ignorance and prejudice propel suspicions regarding the conduct and the appearance of female writers. Given that whatever did not fit inside accepted schemas for women's writing at the time is considered "virile,"[24] the public relies on stereotypical gender-bending female characters—the butch and the amazon—to aggressively fabricate imagined identities for women writers. In other words, the female author comes to embody her

[24] See: (Bieder, "Gender and Language" 99) and (Heras i Trias 435).

transgressive behavior.[25] Català's letter underscores her hope that her pseudonym will relieve her from social and critical evaluations that center on irrelevant perceptions of her gender expression.

In another letter from the same year, Català again focuses on the community's judgmental gaze, but to different ends. In an October 1903 letter to Joan Maragall, written four months before the first installment of *Solitud* is published in the magazine *Joventut,* Català explains the consequences of her newfound notoriety:

> Abans jo era jo i podia escriure lo que em demanava el cor i l'enteniment; avui torno a ésser una noia, una noia de família i d'estament determinat, que té determinades relacions socials, i aquestes, plenes de prejudicis i cosetes, judiquen i fallen segons elles, no segons jo [...] [S]ento lligat mon pensament davant de l'obra a fer i alterades mes percepcions de la vida, per la por a l'amic, al burgès...al monstre que em coneix i que m'espia. ("A Joan Maragall, 10" 1797)
>
> (Before I was myself and I could write whatever my heart and mind desired; today I am again a girl, a girl from a certain family and social class, that has certain social relationships, and these, full of prejudices and petty things, judge and condemn according to themselves, not according to me […] I feel my thoughts [are] restricted in the face of my pending work and my perceptions of life [are] altered, because of my fear of the friend, the bourgeoisie…the monster that knows and spies on me.)

Different from her letter to Matheu, in this missive Català positions herself as the recipient of an unwelcome gaze from those that know her (the "amic" she mentions) as well as those that do not (the anonymous "burgès," for instance). For Català, it is clear that being herself—an unmarried

[25] On embodied deviance, see: (Terry and Urla 2) and (Tsuchiya 14).

woman who chooses to write on a range of topics—leads to social condemnation. Furthermore, Català explains that because of her class position, she is infantilized and restricted by class expectations: as a thirty-seven year old woman, she again becomes a girl subject to "prejudicis i cosetes" ("prejudices and petty things"). Through Català's correspondence, it becomes apparent that the gendered literary environment limits creative freedom by reminding women authors of the judgmental gaze of their readers. The author recognizes that she must feign modesty and disinterest, accept being labeled as manly, or experience paternalistic control from the suspicious gaze of others.[26]

In a 1926 interview with Tomàs Garcés, Català brings attention to the lasting impact of the *Jocs* by reiterating that they incited the public's invasive interest in the female writer's personal identity. Català again describes the after-effects of the literary contest in terms of the suspicions that her work aroused and the problem that her sex poses for her:

> Hi hagué unes discussions fantàstiques, es veu, sobre qui era l'autor del treball. […] Quan van saber que l'autor era una dona, l'escàndol va ser més gros. No trobaven correcte que jo contés la història d'un infanticidi. I no obstant, és pot tenir límits l'obra de l'artista? No crec que unes normes morals puguin frenar-la. (Garcés 1748)
>
> (There were some fantasy-fueled discussions, apparently, about who was the author of the work. […] When they found out that the author was a woman, the scandal was even greater. They did not think it was appropriate for me to tell the story of an infanticide. And nonetheless, can the work of an artist have limits? I do not think that some moral norms can stop it.)

[26] See also: ("A Joan Maragall, 8" 1794) for her admission of social performance.

Català's acknowledgement of the "fantastic" nature of the debates about her identity alludes to their speculative nature. By stating that judges' interest in her gender supplanted their interest in the quality of her work, Català lays bare their discriminatory practices of literary evaluation, which serve to create limitations, both moral and artistic, for the author. Català transitions from specifics regarding the *Jocs* to a more general assertion of her writing methods by emphasizing that it is not the task of critics to rein in the capacities of an artist; the artist must remain free to create as he or she sees fit.

II. Modeling Literary Creation and Reception in *Solitud*

The writing methods that begin to take shape in the years following the *Jocs Florals* become transposed to a fictional context in Català's canonical novel, *Solitud*. In narrative form, the novel addresses factors relevant to the participation of women writers in the early twentieth-century cultural context, such as their ability to do creative work and the frequently gossipy criticism they received. The novel theorizes processes of literary creation (across gender boundaries) and reception (including both positive and negative effects) in order to advocate for fairer treatment of female authors.

Solitud recounts around a year in the life of the young Mila, who is newly married to a man who is a distant match for her in intellect, energy, and work ethic. The couple has taken up residence in a lonely rural mountain hermitage dedicated to Sant Ponç. The few options for diversions drive Mila's husband Matias into the company of the nefarious Ànima, and lead Mila to Gaietà, a shepherd who is mystically wise and a gifted storyteller. Among other benefits, Gaietà's stories provide psychological sustenance to Mila, combatting her loneliness and leading to productive introspection. However, when townspeople begin to fabricate their own stories

about the potential immorality of this relationship, Gaietà and Mila are dealt a cruel fate: Gaietà is murdered and Mila is emotionally and physically violated. The novel concludes as Mila chooses to leave her husband and the mountain; solitude becomes the only viable way forth.

The prominent role of storytelling in *Solitud* has attracted critical attention. Stories in *Solitud* have been studied as a catalyst for Mila's growth and development, awakening and/or coming-of-age.[27] They have also been examined in terms of form, with arguments that the text pays homage to oral storytelling (Oriol and López 403) or unveils a transcendent Catalan mythology (Vicente García 178). On a meta-literary level, critics have begun to address how the novel symbolically shows what stories do. Susana Rafert asks (though does not answer conclusively) the question: "I si fos *Solitud* senzillament la història de la lectura en la nostra literatura moderna?" (278) ("And [what] if *Solitud* were simply the history of reading in our modern literature?"). Along these lines, Helena Alvarado and Àngela Bagués highlight the implicit parallel between Gaietà's folktales and literature at large (Alvarado 131; Bagués, *Discursos* 81). For her part, Bagués acknowledges that criticism has yet to address Gaietà's legends in great detail (*Discursos* 81-83). Considering not *Solitud* in particular, but Català's oeuvre in general, Gabriella Gavagnin proposes that the author establishes "teoria poètica" (219) ("poetic theory") in her non-fiction writing.

This chapter (and, indeed, this entire dissertation) defends that Català's "poetic theory"—or, her writing methods—permeates her fictional texts, including her first novel *Solitud* and the stories-within-a-story that it contains. Through this work to develop her own poetic theory, Català becomes aligned with preceding generations of creative women who counter their mad and monstrous popular images by inserting positive images of themselves in their texts (Gómez-

[27] See: (Hackbarth), (Rotella, "Women Alone" 107), (Castellanos, "'Solitud', novel·la" 57-58).

Castellano 189).[28] For instance, the Romantic author Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda devises complementary characters that possess both masculine and feminine traits in order to show a fuller picture of "las estrategias femeninas de creación de un sujeto romántico" (Gómez-Castellano 198). Similarly, Català's novel reconfigures gendered expectations about the nature of poiesis, which traditionally positions men as creators and women as passive observers, by putting creation in the hands of both male and female characters whose actions do not strictly conform to norms of their sex.

III. Gaietà's and Mila's Methods of [Literary] Creation

In that Gaietà is the primary "author" of stories in *Solitud*, his position aligns with traditional schema of men as makers—although, ironically, he is devised by a female writer and exhibits some traits typically associated with women of the time. As one example, Gaietà attributes his storytelling capacities to outside influences—namely, the Lord and village elders (110)—, which points to both his faith and his humility. These traits distinguish him from other men in the village, who poke fun at the clergy and act arrogantly at a local festival (76-78). Instead, Gaietà seems reluctant to take credit for his own work, similar to those women writers who shun any "admission of ambition."[29] The shepherd's explanation of his creative process reveals what (or who) is truly responsible for his tales, though:

[28] Irene Gómez-Castellano and Maria Lluïsa Guardiola demonstrate that in patriarchal nineteenth century societies, creative women become associated with monstrosity and madness (Gómez-Castellano 189; Guardiola 2).

[29] According to Carolyn Heilbrun, the autobiographical narratives of women writers omit any "admission of ambition" until some time after the turn of the twentieth century (qtd. in Bieder, "Emilia" 21).

> Con vegi un paratge nou de la muntanya, m'assegui tot solic i me'l miri bé una bella estona; i mirant-me'l, senti un escalfor en la boca del cor, i de mica en mica aqueia escalfor me se'n pugi en amunt com una fumera, i m'ompli el cap i me fa rumiar, rumiar... I com si una veu me les anés dient, me vénen totes les coses que hi deuen havere passades en aqueis paratges... I per això jo digui que me les conti Nostro Senyor, perquè, digueu: ¿pot éssere atra que la veu de Nostro Senyor aquesta que un hom se senti ací dedins con rumia? (110)
>
> (When I find a new spot in the mountains, I sit down all by myself and take a good look at it, and while I'm looking, I can feel [a warmth in the mouth of my heart], and that warmth [rises like smoke through a chimney and it fills my head and makes me ruminate over and over] …And like some voice was telling me, I think of everything that must have happened there…And that's why I say it must be Our Lord, because [could it be anything other than the voice of Our Lord what a man hears in here when he thinks?] [147])[30]

The natural causes (like heat rising) of Gaietà's writing process allude to Romantic (and *Modernista*) topoi regarding the spontaneous, emotive, and instinctual creation of art.[31] They also serve to connect Gaietà's creative process to Català, who similarly describes her drive to create as a natural urge (concretely, a hunger). Gaietà determines that his stories must be divinely inspired when he fails to surmise any other possible source. However, given that inspiration strikes when he sits "tot solic" in observation of his environment, no other creator/Creator could

[30] To compensate for significant translation losses in David Rosenthal's English edition of *Solitud*, I have added in brackets ideas missing or fragmented in Rosenthal's English language rendering.

[31] Catalan *Modernisme*, similar to Spanish Romanticism, emphasizes the spontaneity of the artist. See: (Casacuberta and Rius 38).

be responsible for them. The dramatic irony underscores that the shepherd overlooks the obvious: the voice he hears and the stories it tells are his own. In several instances, Mila affirms—either to herself or aloud—that Gaietà's creations are indeed self-generated, saying: "Vós, vós sol heu fet el miracle amb les vostres falòrnies, que tot ho capgiren i ho fan veure pel costat més bonic" (121) ("You [you alone] did it with your stories, which show the good side of everything" [160]).[32] In this way, Mila's function is to acknowledge this creator properly, regardless of his own reluctance. Thus, one way around authorial humility (feigned or authentic) is by using a third-party as an accreditor, which recalls how many women authors emphasize external motives for their writing (the bidding of a friend in the case of Català, a dire economic situation in the case of Cecilia Böhl de Faber [Davies 43]). Mila's insistence that Gaietà is the true creator also has implications for considerations of the autonomy of the artist; the shepherd's work should be solely attributed to him.

The descriptions of the creative processes employed by Gaietà resemble aspects of authorial self-reflection seen in works by Català and her female predecessors. The moves shared between Català and Gaietà demonstrate that there exists a concrete and consistent perception of a theory of artistic creation across Català's oeuvre. Similar to Gaietà, Català also works in isolation, which serves to defend her propriety and her independent authorship. Moral rectitude is a concern for women writers because of the association between the published female author and the harlot, according to Arkinstall (36). Català counters this perception by claiming to live a chaste and isolated life, far from the illicit circulation of certain women. In an interview with Tomàs Garcés in 1926, Català calls her existence a "vida de monja i de finestrons tancats"

[32] In another instance, the narrator notes Mila's impression that, "A voltes li semblava que el pastor era un nen gran que donava massa crèdit a les rondalles que ell mateix s'enginyava" (134) ("Sometimes Gaietà behaved like an overgrown child who believed [the tales that he himself conjured up]" [174]).

(Garcés 1748) ("life of a nun and of closed shutters"). Furthermore, she insists that she creates alone, as a "partidària de l'isolament" (Garcés 1751) ("devotee of isolation"). On more than one occasion, the depiction of her solitary life has contributed to a domesticated view of the author.[33] Nonetheless, these statements are clearly hyperbolic in light of her travels around Europe and frequent trips to her apartment in Barcelona, which Català discusses in letters.[34] As such, Català's isolation is more a matter of biographical fiction than of fact, curated to put forth a certain, well-mannered image.

Català's assertion that she creates in isolation also supports her claim of artistic autonomy. In letters to colleagues, Català explains that she is self-taught, "sense mestres ni apriorismes de cap mena" ") ("81. Caterina Albert" 190) ("without teachers or preconceptions of any type.[35] Aside from reinforcing Català's creation as her own and not the work of another, this assertion also signals her command of Modernist literary discourses, which center on breaking with the molds of the past (Marfany, "Sobre el significat" 75). Like Gaietà, she explains that her surroundings inspire her [instinctive] work, which she calls the "fruit espontani de mon temperament i de les impressions rebutjades en un ambient determinat" (Garcés 1785) ("spontaneous fruit of my temperament and of the impressions received in a certain environment"). The author's description of creating "naturally" demonstrates her compliance with contemporary Catalan aesthetic values, which privilege spontaneous creativity over stuffy "retoricisme castellà" ("Castilian rhetoric") (Casacuberta and Rius 38).

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[33] See, for instance: (Miracle, Caterina 140), (Hackbarth 99). In a letter to Maragall, she calls herself a "persona reclosa" ("reclusive person") ("A Joan Maragall, 10" 1796).

[34] See: ("A Joan Maragall, 9"), ("A Joan Maragall, 10"), ("A Joan Maragall, 13"), ("A Joan Maragall, 14").

[35] See also: letter to Maragall ("A Joan Maragall, 5" 1789).

It seems paradoxical that instinct—often gendered as feminine—could form the foundation for the sought-after "literatura mascle" of Catalan *modernista* writing. As Maryellen Bieder asserts, though, "the attributing of maleness or femaleness to writing is always a critical manœuvre" ("Gender" 102), which is to say that to consider a given text "masculine" or "feminine" is a matter of cultural perception over any inherent qualities. By operating between gendered boundaries rather than conforming to them, Català, Gaietà, and even Catalan modernism itself all draw attention to the artificiality of gendering writing and those that create it. Attending to gender, rather than to creative capacities, ultimately restricts the production (and reception) of art. By depicting creative characters whose actions do not strictly conform to traditional gender norms, Català brings to the fore diverse and autonomous poietic processes.

Mila's work, similar to Gaietà's, reflects attributes typically associated with both women and men. Although Mila compares herself to *el Vell dels romanços*, or the old storyteller, she does not create by devising stories, but rather by cleaning the musty, unkempt hermitage where she and her husband Matias have taken up residence (37). In this way, the driving force behind Mila's labors aligns with appropriate motives for women's work, which include an intrinsic sense of recognition or reward—particularly if this work is restricted to the feminine domain of the home. In parallel to how Català claims to write as a palliative and a source of comfort, Mila also cleans for emotional reasons in order to make sense of her surroundings and lift her spirits. In her cleaning "artistry," Mila succeeds in making the hermitage tell a different story: "D'aleshores en avall, les tauletes passaren a ésser per ella objectes corrents; i quan, ja netes i resplendents, com fetes de tot just [...] fins la feren riure i tot" (37). ("From then on, the [votive] boards became familiar objects, and when they all shone like new […] they even made her laugh" [55]). Her assiduous efforts to expunge the hermitage of years of grime signify an

important accomplishment, which she completes "tota soleta" ("all by herself"), foreshadowing her later move towards independence (36). Mila's tidying becomes a method to both beautify and control a formidable reality (Castellanos, "'Solitud', novel·la" 51).

Although Mila creates within domestic confines, her work also transcends the bounds of typically gendered behavior. She experiences drives that distinguish her from the village housewives, who toil mindlessly like ants "sense instints, sense febres, sense claredat de seny" (67) ("without desires, yearnings, consciousness" [94]). On the other hand, Mila possess desires so great that they temporarily escape her control: her cleaning fever leads her to an "excitació voluptuosa" (34) ("voluptuous thrill" [51]). This sexualized self-satisfaction compensates for her sapless husband, who is "una bèstia sense zel" (66) ("[an animal] never in rut]" [93]).[36] Here, the metaphor of Matias's sexual impotence serves to show that women are perfectly capable of achieving a pleasurable state of self-satisfaction. Mila's cleaning disproves the belief that domesticity and sexuality cannot coexist, a thesis that works by earlier women writers such as Böhl de Faber seek to defend (Davies 49). The tidying takes a narcissistic turn when Mila gazes into a newly shined brass basin and delights in her own reflection (40). In order to avoid giving the impression that she enjoys the product of her work as much as she does, she performs reticence by scolding herself for such indulgent behavior, much like contemporary female authors might. Although she avoids any feeling of prolonged gratification, Mila has succeeded in molding the hermitage into a pleasant reflection of herself, recalling the positive self-image that nineteenth-century female writers also strived to create through their work (Gómez-Castellano 189). Mila's cleaning is thus inscribed with new, proto-feminist values that reformulate the

[36] See also: (Català, *Solitud* 48).

gendered norms with which it is often associated in order to show women's work as inventive, responsive, and satisfying.

The methods of creation modeled in *Solitud* center on the individual creator and his or her unique circumstances. Through his storytelling processes, the figure of the shepherd represents *modernista* writing tropes, including the ideal of inspiration in isolation as a means to autonomy and to authenticity. On the other hand, Mila embodies the affective benefits of artistic work in terms of positive self-perception and an augmented sense of personal agency. For Gaietà and Mila, gender informs but does not wholly determine what they create. Ultimately, gender boundaries prove flexible, which functions to defend the production of art as a skill that both men and women possess—even though social conditions remain unequal.

IV. Methods of Reception in *Solitud*

Solitud reveals the effects of creation on individual creators, but also turns outward to explore how works of art shape their public. In this way, the novel implicates itself in the entire life cycle of a story in order to show a complete method of literary practice from creation to reception. Past critics have examined the depiction of reception in *Solitud* from an ideological perspective, especially in relation to the representation of gender. They argue that the stories that Mila hears transmit misogynist and patriarchal messages.[37] However, Català's texts make the case that content should not overly determine interpretation. In the prologue to her short story collection *Drames Rurals* (1902), Català facetiously states that city women should not read her dark stories because they are not prepared for tales of a cruel rural world: "Plega, doncs damisel·la ciutadana; creu-me, plega i somnia!" (432) ("Go away, then, city damsel; believe me,

[37] See: (Moller Soler 86), (Torres-Pou 203), (Bagués, *Discursos* 82).

go and dream!"). The tongue-in-cheek tone of the prologue illustrates Català's irritation with the way that certain plots are not considered "appropriate" for certain audiences, particularly women. In *Solitud*, Català shows how, in the same way that both men and women can create, both men and women can actively interpret without indiscriminate acceptance. Thus, the limited interpretive lens that comes from a narrow focus on the content of these stories fails to account for the other effects of reception depicted in the novel, including affective ones.

The reception of stories in *Solitud* prompts recognition and enchantment in their audience. According to Rita Felski, recognition, in relation to storytelling, refers to acknowledging and accompanying (i.e. recognizing someone and their struggles), accepting and dignifying (i.e. recognizing the value of something), and self-identifying (i.e. recognizing oneself in a given work) (*Uses* 33). In *Solitud*, recognition matters because it offers Mila a sense of community despite her isolation and leads to reflections that help Mila transform her reality. On the other hand, enchantment involves what Felski calls "a state of intense involvement" with a given piece of art (54) and leads to a distancing or an escape from a certain reality through its magical and metaphysical pull (57, 70). Enchantment in this novel serves to revalue, instead of devalue, a distinctively anti-modern "technology"—storytelling—that allows for a beneficial temporary release from unpleasant circumstances. Mila's responses to Gaietà's stories thus model a methods of literary reception founded in the positive and transformative power of fiction.

For Mila, storytelling first allays her sense of solitude and estrangement by providing community and recognition. The novel establishes Mila's lack of integration by contrasting her beliefs to those of the women around her. For instance, she views what other women accept as one of the most sanctifying and rewarding experiences—motherhood—as undesirable karmic

retribution: "[L]a maternitat, aquella somniada font de ventures inestroncables i de conhorts de tota pena, podia ésser a voltes quelcom terrible, una mena de puniment a bestreta del més espantós delicte que es pogués cometre en altres vides" (93) ("motherhood, that unquenchable and dreamed-of source of joy and comfort, could sometimes be a punishment for one's sins in other lives [128]). These observations underscore her perceived distance from a community of women who find purpose in their domestic roles. Yet, unlike the male modernist subject for whom the release from such burdens clears the way to other paths of fulfillment, for Mila her lack of satisfaction in this realm brings a deep sense of isolation, rather than freedom, because there are few, if any, viable alternatives.

The first of Gaietà's legends that Mila hears exploits her sensitive and lonely state with its frightening recollection of a Moorish king and beheaded maidens. However, the shepherd's presence proves to be more reassuring than the tale is frightening: "L'horror d'aquella faula esblaimà la dona; mes la figura placèvola del pastor l'asserenà, semblant dir-li que no tot era terrible i dolorós en l'enclòs d'aquelles muntanyes fosques" (31-32) ("The woman paled at that grisly tale, but the shepherd's cheerful face calmed her, seeming to say that not all was dreadful and tragic in those dark mountains" [49]). While the content of the story brings about no beneficial effects, the sense of companionship fostered by the act of storytelling proves soothing to Mila. The live performance of a story serves to promote the audience's identification not only with the characters in the story but also with those who share the experience of viewing and/or hearing (Felski, *Uses* 33). The oral story form or indeed any act of reading that creates a shared audience doubles the possibilities for recognition, which fulfills a need for community and mutual understanding. To this end, Brad Epps notes that the togetherness fostered by Gaietà's stories extends to all that take part in them, including Mila and others ("Cadaver" 31).

The next legend that Gaietà tells illustrates a second effect of storytelling: alignment with fictional characters. Alignment describes the way in which formal narrative techniques, such as point of view, lead the reading or listening public to a process to reflect on themselves and their circumstances (Felski, *Uses* 34-35). Felski asserts that alignment is often conflated with allegiance, despite the fact that these processes differ in their effects on the public (*Uses* 34). While the former leads to greater knowledge of self, the latter entails "a temporary relinquishing of reflective and analytical consciousness" as the readers (or listeners) lose themselves in the fiction's characters (Felski, *Uses* 34-35). The distinction between alignment and allegiance has consequences for the critical interpretation of Mila's reception of Gaietà's legends. As one example, feminist readers have been troubled by what they view as the patriarchal and even misogynist content of the shepherd's stories. One critic, Maria Lourdes Moller Soler, avers: "Para el Pastor, Mila será la figura de la mujer-niña, a quien se tiene que instruir y educar, lo que realiza a través de leyendas didácticas, en el fondo, pero, todas ellas con contenido misógino" (86). Implicit in Moller Soler's assertion is that Mila responds to Gaietà's story by identifying with their second-class female protagonists and absorbing their stories, roles, and/or fates without further examination. This reasoning reflects the process described by Felski as allegiance, in which the critic assumes that identification necessarily entails indiscriminate acceptance (*Uses* 34).

Nonetheless, by distinguishing alignment from allegiance, it becomes clear that Mila is not the gullible or mindless consumer of tales. While some scholars have alluded to Mila's ability to engage critically with Gaietà's ostensibly patriarchal tales, this capacity bears a closer look because it serves as an indicator of Mila's nascent agency.[38] In one instance, Mila listens to

[38] See: (Bagués *Discursos* 82) and (Torres-Pou 203).

the story of a maiden, nicknamed *Sol de Murons*, who cuts off her exceptional tresses as an offering to Sant Ponç. Though the offering saves the man's life, he turns out to be an ungrateful love interest for whom Sol has sacrificed herself fruitlessly. Upon hearing this tale, Mila does not respond with the passive acceptance or even the belittling pity that one might expect if she were indeed to internalize the story's misogynistic message. Instead, she engages in an empowering process of self-reflection and asserts "amb un urc de fembra superba […] 'Per tots els homes del món no hauria donat jo semblant riquesa!'" (45) ("with female pride […] 'I wouldn't give up [such a valuable item] for all the men on earth'" [65]). The term *urc* elicits an image of bravery, vitality, and vigor, while *superba* denotes the pride, even arrogance, found in Mila's self-talk. This image hardly reflects a woman victimized by an ungrateful male partner. Instead, recognition as prompted by alignment in the story of Sol de Murons allows both Mila and the public to see alternatives to the message presented and to question the stories that one is told.

Mila's response to the maiden's tale is not merely internal, though. Because of the experience of recognition, she takes action and decides to clean the hair referred to in the legend—rather erotically—in order to restore it to its original beauty. The story prompts a change in Mila's perception of her own reality and leads her to reclaim Sol's dignity by valorizing the object that she sacrificed. Mila honors the offering as one that is as significant and holy as she places it back in the chapel, asserting that this hair "no havia pas d'ésser menys que tot lo altre de la capella" (44) ("was as deserving as anything else in the chapel" [64]). For Mila, the work of interpretation reshapes the ostensible significance of a story's content. Her capacity to create meaning from the story in a way that counters its explicit moral ("beware of bad men") contradicts the aim for the new, turn-of-the-century Catalan literature to paint morals as black and white, without "mitjos tons" ("middle tones") (Casacuberta i Rius 32-33). Mila's act of

reception shows that dark or tragic themes—favored by many of Català's stories, but scorned by conservative literary ideologues—also have redemptive value by provoking reflexive engagement.

The conditions of Mila's reality heighten the allure of, or perhaps need for, the myth and magic that she hears in Gaietà's tales. Mila's fruitless marriage, which in more ideal conditions might be a locus of stability and companionship, remains a source of grief and disappointment. In light of this unfortunate existence, Gaietà's words elicit a profound effect:

> Quan el pastor deixava de parlar, la Mila no es recordava ja de son casament amb En Matias ni de cap cabòria consirosa que pogués entelar la placidesa de sa revifalla, i com al vinent dia sentia una nova rondalla, i una altra i una altra després—perquè la verbigàlia majestàtica del pastor semblava eterna i incansable com les onades de la mar—, la Mila acabà per perdre de vista sa pròpia vida migradeta i esquifida de modest ésser humà, per a entrar de ple en la vida fantàstica de la muntanya. (109)
>
> (By the time [that] Gaietà had finished, Mila no longer recalled her marriage, nor did troubling memories disturb her peaceful recovery, and since the morrow would bring another tale, and still another the day after—for the shepherd's majestic flow of words seemed [as] inexhaustible as the sea—Mila finally lost sight of her own stunted life as a simple human being and entered the mountains' fantastic realm. [146])

In the absence of a sense of fulfillment as a wife (or mother), Gaietà's stories serve as a therapeutic escape from reality (Vicente García 180). For Mila, the shepherd's stories operate with cumulative effect, pulling her further and further from misery into an imagined world.

The unusual form of the shepherd's speech further draws in his listeners to the alternate realities that his stories create. The narrator reports that "sa paraula, reposada i suau, plena de

l'encís foraster que havia servat dels paratges de naixença, s'aixecava en la calma roenta de la peça amb una gran majestat, senzilla i misteriosa, de ritus druídic" (55) ("his soft voice, suffused with the lilt of his distant birthplace, filled the cozy room with its simple druidic majesty" [79]). Gaietà's language creates narrative interest because it is both different (majestic, mysterious, foreign) and accessible (soft, reposed, simple). The timeless appeal of his storytelling is signaled by an allusion to the Druids, an ancient culture known for their storytellers and soothsayers. Taken as a whole, Gaietà's stories and the language he uses to tell them open up new ways of seeing for Mila (and other members of his audience).

Mila's experience of enchantment provides her with a new lens through which she can view her surroundings and provide an impetus for her to create her own stories. After hearing a number of Gaietà's tales, Mila starts to view the ordinary mountain landscape as a font for new narratives: "De cada paratge, de cada roca, de cada branquilló, en veia brollar una llegenda, i el sentit de lo meravellós es despertà en ella com una nova consciència superior" (109) ("From every rock, field, and branch, a legend sprouted, and her sense of wonder blossomed into a new and higher awareness" [146]). From these mundane objects, she begins to see a poetic/poietic landscape in which stones turn into stories. The novel shows democratic access to the tools of transforming one's reality—one need only to listen, look, and imagine. Although the feeling of enchantment that comes from listening to stories is temporary, it serves as a catalyst for more extensive awakenings. As represented by the text, literature, in oral or written form, transforms its audience, their perceptions of reality, and their own creative capacities.

The affective responses of recognition and enchantment ultimately work as symbiotic partners in the novel, each enhancing the functions of the other. They catalyze Mila's personal development and prepare her to manage her future solitude. Towards the end of the novel, the

narrator's and Mila's voices blend in free indirect speech, pondering together the sensorial and intellectual effects of Gaietà's stories:

> Sí, totes aquelles faules parlaven d'altres vides, d'una supervivència misteriosa de tot lo que ha existit; mes eren faules, faules que encantaven l'orella i l'enteniment, però faules tan sols...I l'esperit escèptic de la dona es negava a donar crèdit a tot lo que no testimoniaven sos sentits, fins que s'encallava finalment en una darrera faula: la de l'esquellinc del Cimalt.
>
> També aquella, faula solament?...No, no, aquella no! (166)
>
> (All Gaietà's tales were about the [mysterious] persistence of [all that] had once existed. But they were merely stories invented to [enchant the ear and understanding], and Mila's skeptical mind refused to credit what her senses could not perceive…till she ran up against his last one: the skeleton on Highpeak.
>
> Was that just another tale? No it wasn't… [212])

As Mila comes to recognize the workings of her momentary enchantment, she decides to believe only what she has experienced first-hand. Her growing incredulousness shows that that she has become "a modern woman for modern times" (Epps, "Cadaver" 34). Despite Mila's growing wariness of fictional tales, she choses not discount the last story that she was told, a decision that could relate to its content. In Gaietà's last story, a wicked man receives swift punishment after defiling a holy space. For Mila, recently assaulted by a man who remains unpunished, this story functions to fulfill a need for justice. Mila's use of Gaietà's stories, then, not only signifies her skepticism, but also her newfound ability to independently recognize her needs and meet them. Mila evolves from having "el cap ple de boires" (161) ("a head full of fog") to experiencing a

"claredat novella" (164) ("new clarity" [210]) through her recollection of Gaietà's tales.[39] This is precisely the role of escapist literature: to allow for "vital reflections, new perceptions and self-discovery" in the space between fiction and one's objective reality (Begum 744).

At the novel's end, the lasting value of Gaietà's storytelling comes to the fore. With newfound lucidity, Mila begins to see her world from Gaietà's perspective:

> El pastor ja n'hauria tret una rondalla d'aquest aucell i d'aquesta estrella...Era un savi, el pastor…Semblava que Floridalba li hagués fet el do que prometia al penitent que no havia conegut mai dona nada…Sí, era un savi i mai s'errava, com si per endavant sapigués tot lo que havia de venir…(165)
>
> (The shepherd would have made up a story about that bird and that star…What a wise man he was. It was as if Dawnflower had given him the wisdom she had promised that old man…Yes, Gaietà [was a wise man and never erred, as if he] always knew what was going to happen… [211])

This excerpt draws attention to Mila's capacity to come to her own conclusions, as she determines—contrary to Gaietà's earlier assertions of providential inspiration—that the source of Gaietà's tales is only his surroundings. As a result, she begins to detect for herself the [earthly and secular] places from which stories may emerge, including rocks, fields, and branches. While Mila attributes a certain prophetic nature to the shepherd, she, too, clairvoyantly pieces together the story of what must have happened to Gaietà. As she employs her divining skills to put together the truth about what happened in the past (rather than the future), the complementary characteristics of Gaietà and Mila reappear. The male creator has died, but now she will take his

[39] Rosenthal translates this phrase as "hazy" (207), but does not clearly show that this haziness derives from her mental state.

place. In this sense, Mila's time with Gaietà has served as a storytelling apprenticeship. Reception can function to inspire creation.

The ability to tell her own tales will later allow Mila to reclaim agency over traumatic parts of her recent past and then to imagine and pursue a new future for herself. Her narrative capacities come to the center when she decides to explain her rape at the hands of Ànima to her absentee husband. In order to avoid sensationalizing or eroticizing the ordeal, the novel does not include her version of events, but rather brings to the fore her disposition while she recounts them. She tells her story, "sense crits, sense gestes, sense llàgrimes, amb una sobrietat tràgicament despullada" (167) ("without cries, without gestures, without tears, with a tragically stripped sobriety").[40] The term"despullada," stripped or denuded, makes clear reference to Mila's physical experience during the rape. Furthermore, it recalls Català's statement that the public *despulla*, in the sense of dispossesses, the woman writer of her feminine identity. Here, though, the term references Mila's solemn tone, her emotional regulation underscoring her ability to take control of the situation via her storytelling, just as cleaning once allowed her to shape other aspects of her reality. As in other works of twentieth-century Hispanic literature, storytelling reorders and reinterprets an overwhelming and confusing reality (Amago, *True Lies* 64).

IV. The Workings of Gossip and Suspicious Reception

Despite the beneficial effects of some stories in *Solitud*, those told by unreliable observers lead to harmful outcomes. Before the violent denouement, Mila's neighbors begin to gossip about her, sparked by her increasing sense of independence and subjectivity. Though little studied in prior criticism, the importance of these untrue stories should not be overlooked, as the

[40] Because Rosenthal's translation omits part of this phrase, this translation is my own.

novel contains an entire chapter called “Sospites” (“Suspicions”). The novel’s critique of gossip stands as a symbolic response to those members of Català’s public that invented and promoted misguided stories about her identity.

In *Solitud*, gossip stems from the assumptions made by others and perpetuates false motives for Mila’s behavior. On one of Mila’s outings with Gaietà, trouble begins with Ànima’s invasive gaze, which acts as the “monstre que em coneix i que m’espia” (“monster that knows and spies on me”) of which Català speaks in her letters. In both the novel and Català’s correspondence, an unwelcome third party looks in on a private pursuit with the intent not to understand but to judge. When Gaietà later turns up dead (murdered by Ànima), Mila becomes the subject of gossip due to the unusual sum of money that her husband Matias has recently acquired and used to settle his gambling debts. Instead of recognizing that Ànima had stolen the coins from Gaietà when he was murdered, townspeople take aim at Mila. They assume that the shepherd “*devia haver pagat voluntats*” (154, emphasis in original) (“paid his debts” [198]) to Mila for “determinats serveis” (154) (“her favors” [198]), which she must have offered him during their time together. This exchange illustrates how gossip unduly censures a woman’s behavior by fabricating exaggerated and immoral motives, such as prostitution. For both Mila and for female author/harlots, the body (and sexuality) becomes implicated in their supposedly deviant behavior for which they must pay social consequences.

The workings of gossip underscore the importance of social perception and moral policing in small communities such as Mila’s. A friend, Marieta, confronts Mila about her relationship with Gaietà and the money that Matias acquires soon after his death and repeatedly

asks “What will people think?” (154, 155). The narrator details the effects of these statements through their limited perspective of Mila in order to promote identification with her:[41]

> La Mila sentí passar-li de cap a cap del cos una arrel de feridura. […] Per què es girava tot contra ella? [...] Per què, ell que la volia tant, li havia deixat aquell heretatge de penes en comptes del que la gent es creia? Ell li havia dit que Déu es tornava sempre per la veritat...Si aquella era la manera de tornar-s’hi! […] Com la bèstia que se sent mal ferida i s’encaua per morir, resolgué no tornar a baixar de la muntanya. (155)
>
> (Mila felt a wave of pain spread through her body. […] Why did everything turn [against her]? […] Why had he, who loved her so, left her sorrow instead of riches? He had promised that [God always came back for the truth], but that wasn’t what had happened! […] Like a wounded beast who crawls off to die, she resolved never again to descend the mountain [199-200])

The narrator affirms that the psychological wounds caused by circulating gossip exacerbate the physical and psychological trauma of her rape, amplifying her sense of violation. This circulating gossip recalls the disparaging newspaper articles that were published following the *Jocs* scandal (Casacuberta i Rius 37) and the nosy village voices that Català cites in her [aforementioned] letters. Mila’s husband’s shortcomings—and her innocence—are never revealed, underscoring that truth has little exchange value in the social economy of gossip. Mila’s solution is to isolate herself—first temporarily, by staying at the top of the mountain, and later by leaving it altogether. This decision reflects Català’s symbolic self-sequestration through her assumption of a pseudonym. For both Català and Mila, gossip monitors the gates of community norms and

[41] See: (Culler 28) for discussion on limited point of view.

drives off (or at least intimidates) the outcasts.[42] Those who push boundaries (Gaietà, Mila, Català) experience either physical or social death, precluding any opportunity for their recognition. Gaietà is killed, while Mila and Català experience a social death of sorts. For Català, this "death" marks the end of her public authorial identity as Caterina Albert; for Mila, it marks the beginning of her exile from this mountain community.

Although other characters (including Matias) are the subjects of gossip, Mila remains the only one for whom the repercussions are made evident, which creates sympathy for her position. In response to a friend that has accused her of unchaste actions with the shepherd, Mila emphatically replies: "[…] heu pensat de mi unes coses, que no tenen perdó de Déu […] Tingueu-ho ben present, i quedi jo ací ara mateix si dic mentida! Mai ho he estat la barjaula del pastor, ho sentiu, Marieta?" (154) ("[…] not even God can forgive what you've [thought] […] Just to get this through your skull, and may I be struck dead if I'm lying! I [was never the shepherd's whore]! You hear me, Marieta?" [198]). Later, Mila thinks to herself: "'Vet aquí la seva gelosia! Vet aquí la seva malícia! Temien que ens dongués quelcom!... Gasives!... Malpensats!" (198). ("What a jealous, nasty crew! They were so afraid he'd leave us something! ... How can they be so stingy and mean?" [154]). By citing both Mila's speech and her thoughts, the text puts forth a double defense of her actions. It reveals her innocence by showing that she is not attempting to deceive anyone. Furthermore, in the command to "vet aquí" ("see here") Mila implicates an audience, asking them to take a closer look at what is motivating gossip about her—not noble intentions, but rather petty jealousy and malice. The narrative privileging of Mila's perspective thus diminishes the [tentative] authority of the neighbors' gossip.

[42] On gossip and community norms, see: (Meyer Spacks 7).

However, Mila must not only confront her neighbors but also the village rector and the institution he represents: the Church. Throughout the novel, the reader is positioned against the Church. Catholic mores and traditions are represented as problematic: the eyes of Sant Ponç are fearsome, rather than reassuring (19), mass is a source of literal suffocation, rather than renewal (73), and parishioners are destructive, rather than respectful (86). The village rector confronts Mila in the days following Gaietà's death, which the narrator recounts using free indirect speech:

> S'assegué en un caire de cadira amb els pòsits de reu a qui van a llegir la sentència. Què havia passat d'aquella hora en avall? Com havia anat aquella conversa amb el senyor Rector que tan bella empremta havia de deixar? No hauria pogut dir-ho. No sabia sinó que havia estat sotmesa a un interrogatori minuciós de jutge, ple de preguntes i repreguntes intencionades, de sorpreses i revelacions crudels. De tota aquella xarxa de paranys i subtileses, ella n'havia tret en clar: que el pastor tenia diners "molts, molts, dinerots" […] (156)
>
> (Mila […] now sat on the edge of her seat like a prisoner about to be sentenced. What had happened since their conversation? [How had that conversation with the Rector gone, the one that was supposed to leave such a good impression?] She never found out, but she was put through a grueling interrogation full of leading questions and cruel revelations. In that net of traps and innuendoes, one thing stood out clearly: the shepherd had hidden "money, lots of money"… [200])

A third-person narrator sets the scene, with Mila as the defendant and the rector as the conspiratorial judge. The rector's interrogation is relayed in first-person, which positions the reader to experience the interrogation that she endures. The narrator slips back into a third-person voice to highlight the rector's suspicious thinking with an extensive web of related terms:

"repreguntes intencionades," "sorpreses," "revelacions crudels," "xarxa de paranys," and "subtileses." Although the rector's ostensible aim is to uncover immoral (or criminal) activity, as in other Inquisitions, it instead leaves Mila "sense manera de fer resplendir sa innocència" (157) ("[without] any way to [make her innocence shine through]" [202]). Given that the rector ends up no closer to the truth than when he began, this interaction underscores that suspicion—and the gossip that propels it—remains empty work. It also serves to critique the accusations of real life rectors, such as Esteve Ferrer, who had likened Català's monologue "La infanticida," to heresy (qtd. in Casacuberta and Rius 37).

Solitud reveals how gossip, as a mode of storytelling, ultimately advances faulty theses and harms those who find themselves as its subject, which includes both Mila and Català. Both women are examined as if they were deviants deserving of social sanction, despite their conviction that they have done nothing to deserve such treatment. Neither Mila nor Català passively accepts the consequences of gossip, though; both move towards self-protection. The feeling of emotional isolation that gossip produces leads to the conclusion that isolation—physical or professional—is the preferred option. For Mila and Català, the ability to make this decision choice is facilitated by confidence in their capacity to create, or to continue to create, their own stories going forth.

Solitud serves as a logical and thorough narrative response to the events surrounding the "La infanticida," Català's powerful first monologue centering on the untimely death of a child—a symbol of its own for literary creation. The ensuing public debate, which obsessively focused on Català's gender identity and moral impropriety, evidences that the incipient Catalan literary culture at the turn of the twentieth century remained largely unprepared to recognize the contributions of women writers. Català's first novel brings this same idea to the fore through its

detailed depiction of the gossipy chatter surrounding its female protagonist and the isolation it provokes. Nonetheless, *Solitud* also shows that the community found in stories and storytelling can counter this sentiment by producing opportunities for recognition and enchantment, which leads to the production of new tales. The novel thus marks the early development of Català methods of literary creation and reception. *Solitud* takes a primarily defensive position by centering on a relatively blameless character that is made a victim of her tragic circumstances—a woman with whom anyone could sympathize. Català's next novel, however, follows a much more devious character and takes a more offensive position, arguing for the need for artistic autonomy. This novel, *Un film (3.000 metres)*, is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2: *UN FILM (3.000 METRES)* AND THE QUEST FOR PERSONAL AND ARTISTIC AUTONOMY

Just over halfway through *Un film (3.000 metres)* (1918-1921), two young women cross one of Barcelona's main transit arteries, Avinguda Diagonal. Pepa and Carmeta stand a block away from Passeig de Gràcia, the Champs-Élysées of the Catalan metropolis, in the heart of the *Eixample* ("expansion") district. Wide avenues and truncated city blocks designed by the forward-thinking urban planner Ildefons Cerdà allow for unprecedented urban visibility in an expanded, geometrical, and egalitarian cityscape (Resina 22). Despite the ample new perspectives created by this savvy urban planning, Pepa and Carmeta fail to see what is coming right at them, concretely, "un automòbil i un cavaller que venien per direcció oposada" (328) ("an automobile and a man on horseback coming from opposite directions." A crash appears imminent, as the two women fall prey to "llurs vacil·lacions poc menys que suïcides" (328) ("their almost suicidal hesitation"), but the horseback-riding protagonist, Nonat Ventura, grabs his reins and the accident is narrowly averted. Although all parties involved are unharmed, save for one particularly jolted horse, the imagery in this encounter suggests that in the city, old and new, rich and poor, men and women flirt with collision. Modernity, as embodied by the automobile that blitzes by "com un llamp" (328) ("like lightening"), cannot be slowed, while the modes of the past are uncomfortably obliged to yield or to suffer the consequences. This scene of *Un film* nods to the clash of the two (or more) worldviews coexisting in Catalunya at the turn of the twentieth century: that of the *joves i vells*, which is to say the cultural and political movement of the young *noucentistes* with their pronouncements of beauty, order, and tradition above all

else, and the aging *modernistes* and their rebel artists who pen stories of the rural world, cadavers, and other less savory sides of Catalan culture.[43] This novel, unstudied outside of Catalunya until now, builds on the methods of creation and reception that Català puts forth in her first novel, *Solitud* (1904-1905) by defending the mobility that masquerade allows and by declaring her right to artistic independence.

In order to approach the rebellious artistic project of *Un film*, it is critical to understand the *noucentista* interest in regulating space, class, language, art, and gender, all issues that Català will contest in some form in this novel in order to assert her particular artistic vision. While democratically-minded urban planning guides Ildefons Cerdà's revolutionary nineteenth century design of the *Eixample* (with each citizen granted comparable access to space, light, and transportation), *noucentista* city planners look for what they consider to be the rational separation of working and upper classes into different areas of the city (Torres i Capell 217, 220; Saumell i Olivella 29). Reformers also seek the regulation and standardization of the Catalan language, which they take an important step towards achieving when the *Institut d'estudis catalans* accepts and promotes the use of Pompeu Fabra's renowned *Normes ortogràfiques* (*Orthographic Norms*) in 1913. In parallel to the "pure" language sought by *noucentista* ideologues, art, too, is meant to reflect good taste and classical order. Alicia Suárez and Mercè Vidal assert that structure, harmony, and order characterize the type of *noucentista* art that reformers expect will help regenerate society (226-27). According to Christine Arkinstall, this vision for art relies on the reproduction of gendered norms of a feminized low culture associated with the rural and a masculinized high culture associated with the metropolitan (22-23). Women only enter the realm

[43] On the *joves i vells*, see: (Font 206). On *Modernistes* as rebel artists, see: (Marfany, "Reflexions" 57). On cadavers in Catalan *modernisme*, see: (Epps "Cadaver of Progress").

of high culture insofar as they comply with the roles of the exemplary seen-and-not-heard housewife, as Eugeni d'Ors illustrates in *La Ben Plantada* (1911). In sum, the *noucentista* cultural environment surrounding the novel's creation sought to establish a well-planned order in all areas of city life.

In both thematic and formal ways, the novel calls to mind an almost-compulsive quest for personal liberty in that its orphan protagonist shuns stable, and legal, employment to make a career out of breaking both social norms and national laws. The hybrid nature of *Un film*—part cinematic, part folletinesque, part Realist revamp—presents a rebellious alternative to strict *noucentista* ideals of form and employs genres that are particularly characteristic of, but not native to Barcelona.[44] Hybridity is also present in the novel's use of language, which evidences the still-uneasy relationship between Catalan and Spanish as well as upper and lower classes in the Catalan capital. Similar to how the novel shows a blending of these two languages, it also portrays urban class structures as porous and artificial. Recreational spaces such as the theatre and dining establishments, which typically serve to contain and to promote socioeconomic stratification, become a stage for the deft social performances of a mobile protagonist. Nonat's ability to imitate the wealthy in order to enter these spaces complicates seemingly objective standards of class, of gender, and of taste. Given the environment of controlled/circumscribed creativity in which it is published, *Un film* stands symbolically as a reassertion of Català's own capacity to cross boundaries by creating freely and self-fashioning.

[44] Avoiding the use of autochthonous forms shows yet more deviance from the *noucentista* project, which aspired to an imagined Mediterranean traditionalism in which, as Eugeni d'Ors asserts, "'[f]ora de la tradició, cap veritable originalitat. Tot lo que no és tradició és plagi' [outside of tradition, there is no true originality. Anything that is not tradition is plagiarism]" (qtd. in Arkinstall 41, translation in original).

Because thorough retellings of *Un film* exist elsewhere, a summary suffices here.[45] Nonat's principal motive throughout *Un film* seems to be, at first glance, to move up in society, as if he were a masculine Isidora taking part in an early-twentieth century Catalan rewrite of *La desheredada.* Nonat's desire to belong to the bourgeoisie motivates many of his actions and underscores the perceived superiority of this socioeconomic status. However, what emerges as Nonat's ultimate goal is not wealth or membership in a particular class, but rather the freedom of self-determination and to be "àrbitre absolut en les seves accions" (305) ("absolute arbiter of his actions"). After being raised in an orphanage and witnessing a wealthy parent attempt to reclaim a previously undesired child, the novel's wily protagonist Nonat Ventura becomes convinced that he is destined for something more. His search for his origins leads him from a successful apprenticeship in Girona, to factory work in Barcelona, and finally to a band of thieves that seeks to get rich by any means necessary. Nonat's moral compass leads him further and further astray as he moves from petty theft to breaking and entering, recalling aspects of the seventeenth century picaresque hero projected onto a twentieth century context. His thievery and quest to find what he hopes to be his aristocratic family finally collide when he attempts to rob a visiting ambassador. In a folletinesque twist, the ambassador's wife—unbeknownst to Nonat—happens to be his mother, who recognizes him as the son she once abandoned and with whom she hoped to eventually reunite. Yet, she cannot, or chooses not to, stop his eventual imprisonment. In the manner of an authorial afterthought, the novel's epilogue details Nonat's ill-fated attempt to escape jail, which ends with him dead after being shot in the back.

Scholars have approached Català's novel from a range of perspectives that draw attention to elements central to this chapter. For instance, Àngela Bagués analyzes the role of the urban

[45] Francesca Bartrina provides clear summaries with succinct analysis in her monograph, *Caterina Albert/Víctor Català: La voluptuositat de l'escriptura* (267-68, 270-80, 282-95).

setting and social classes (Bagués, "Des dels marges" 123, 125-26), Maria Aurèlia Capmany discusses Nonat's quest for autonomy (1859), Jordi Castellanos studies interactions with *Noucentista*-era literary society (Castellanos, "La identitat" 57), and Francesca Bartrina addresses the novel's filmic form (*Voluptuositat* 255, "Caterina Albert i el cinema" 216-18). Indeed, formal elements have concerned the novel's readers since its initial release when readers such as Domènec Guansé and Enrich Bosch demonstrate a degree of skepticism towards the novel's filmic structure (Guansé, "Un film" 654; Bosch 374). While some recent scholarship by Juan M. Ribera Llopis deemphasizes the importance of the filmic nature of the novel by asserting that the title is arbitrary and has little relationship to the content of the work ("*Un film*" 19), this chapter will defend that this form indicated by the title remains relevant as an important symbol of authorial rebellion. Thus, this chapter aligns with Maria Aurèlia Capmany's assertion that *Un film*, starting with its very title, is implicated with a genre considered to be at best questionable and at worst detestable (1865)—in other words, the ideal stage from which to show one's counter-cultural stance.

Narratological or spatial perspectives guide other research on *Un Film*. Bartrina identifies the novel's structure and the distancing effect produced by the narrative voice ("Caterina Albert i el cinema" 223, 225). The context of modern, urban life shapes Bagués's examination of the configuration of space in the novel, from the distortions and changing perceptions produced by new modes of transit to the mapping of structures of identity and power that she finds contained within the descriptions of the city streets (125). Jordi Castellanos studies the play of identity and masquerade in the work as a method to return agency to the individual ("Identitat" 63), while M.R. Font asserts, in part, that the novel challenges elitist literary conventions by including characters from diverse socioeconomic boundaries (214). This chapter advances this recent

criticism by bringing together elements previously examined separately, or not at all, and by drawing explicit parallels between Català's non-fictional texts on artistic creation and this fictional one.

I. Català's Non-Fictional Responses to Gender-Based and Artistic Limitations

One of these non-fictional texts is an open letter, a rarity in Català's literary production, published in the journal *L'avi muné* in 1927. This letter, which functions as a post-script, responds to some early criticism of the novel by reviewers such as the aforementioned Bosch and Guansé. Both men spill ink debating where the work's successes and failures lie, which reflects the increasingly prescriptive criteria for "good" writing and correct behavior at the time. The consequence for *noucentista*-era writers who fail to uphold these criteria is critical neglect (Arkinstall 19). Given such prescriptive norms for cultural production, Català writes this letter in order to defend her power to create different types of works, especially after the success of *Solitud*. Català first explains the impositions of her newfound canonicity: "[J]o vaig quedar classificat, vaig tenir l'honor d'ésser col·locat en el rengle dels subjectes a una pauta determinada i inviolable" ("Parlant" 401) ("I was left classified; I had the honor of being placed in the ranks of those subject to a certain and inviolable standard"). Language reflecting entrapment and a lack of subjectivity resounds in this statement. Català's response to this virtual snare will be the unabashed declaration of the right to fashion both oneself and one's work as one pleases, much to the chagrin of those who see her as a writer on the cusp of greatness if only she would show more discipline.[46] Català advocates for the ability to change many times over during her career and to give voice to "aquella pluralitat de persones no iguals" ("Parlant" 402)

[46] Guansé provides a textbook example of such criticism, which will be analyzed later in this chapter.

("that plurality of unequal persons") that lives within. Here, she reaffirms the protean nature of the artist and the fluidity of personality, which finds its reflection in Nonat's many personal reinventions over the course of *Un film*. Català's statement also indicates her opposition to *noucentista* expectations that one write in a style informed by a clearly structured and idealistically oriented Mediterranean classicism.

In Català's extensive epistolary correspondence with contemporary writers and editors, she acknowledges the invasive judgments of others, the use of social performance, and the need for [artistic] liberty—all issues that later appear in fictionalized form in *Un film.* Especially early in her career, Català shows concern for her reputation and the intrusive gaze of the public. In a letter dated April 7, 1903, Català explains to Francesc Matheu why she hopes to keep using her pseudonym: "Com per aquí hi ha curiosos, amichs d'enterarse de lo que jo'no'ls vull deixar saber li prego que no estranyi firmi ab lo pseudónim en lloch del nom […]"("8. Caterina Albert" 135) ("Since there are curious ones around, friends of finding out what I don't want to let them know, I beg you not to be surprised that I sign with my pseudonym rather than my name"). Nonetheless, the name "Víctor Català" serves only as a temporary barrier between the author and the town gossips that she fears. Public knowledge of her identity inevitably occurs, as discussed in chapter 4. As a result, and as previously mentioned in chapter one, Català explains to Joan Maragall that she feels that her freedom to write becomes limited by "la por a l'amic, al burgès…al monstre que em coneix i m'espia" ("A Joan Maragall, 10" 1797) ("the fear of the friend, the bourgeoisie…the monster that knows and spies on me"). Those who have expectations regarding proper behavior for a female writer—friends, an inflexible upper class—possess an intimidating and invasive gaze. According to Català, the fear of their judgment restricts her ability to write freely. Flipping the script on the popular association between the

female writer and the monstrous, here it is not the *autora* but rather her critics who are portrayed as frightful.

Català's response to this atmosphere is not always one of anxiety, though. In other correspondence from the same year, 1903, Català explains that she role-plays to avoid scrutiny and occasionally enjoys the public performances that result:

> L'esprit burleta que niua en lo replec més secret de mon caràcter i que fa d'espectador i crític en tot allà on tinc de fer jo d'actor, no me'n perdona mitja i me fa veure tot lo que té de còmic i curiós—còmic pujat de farsa italiana—lo paper que faig i la situació que les mainades de la gent gran m'han creat. I crega que hi ha vegades—quan estic una mica de bon humor—que, bo i tinguent la cara ben sèria, al sentir als altres i al sentir-me a mi, tinc de posar-me a riure com un beneit. ("A Joan Maragall, 8" 1794)
>
> (The taunting spirit that nests in the most secret fold of my character and that acts as a spectator and critic when I have to be an actor, doesn't even half-forgive me. It makes me see all the comic and curious—comic from Italian farces—in the role that I play and the situation that herds of old people have created for me. And believe you that there are times—when I'm in a little bit of a good mood—that, with a rather serious face, I have to start laughing like a idiot when I hear others and hear myself.)

Català separates her thoughts from her behavior in order to respond to the social expectations inherent in the environment in which she finds herself. The manner in which she describes her experience of a split personality—part actor, part spectator and critic—serves to show the self-conscious nature of her act. While the setting and the circumstances are quite different for Nonat than for Català, performativity takes a central role in both of their quests for self-determination. Acting allows both author and protagonist to regain a sense of agency when class or gender

limitations restrict their liberties. When curious gossips seek to puzzle out the true identity of Català in her small town, her performance allows her to limit what they judge by playing with what they can see.

When judgment of the person does not remain separate from judgment of the product of their work, Català bemoans the cost to one's creative (and personal) liberty. For Català, the quality of the work speaks for itself and the identity of its writer remains irrelevant. In a January 1903 letter to Joan Maragall, she writes: "[…] quina falla fa que […] surti a relluir lo sexe, el nom, totes aquelles particularitats que res tenen que veure amb la cosa en si […]?" ("A Joan Maragall, 3" 1787) ("[…] What need is there […] to bring to light the sex, the name, all of those particularities that have nothing to do with the thing in itself […]?") Català's rhetorical questioning works to argue that her works can "compete" with others to the extent that external factors (her gender, her class) are not valued over internal ones. What holds back her texts, or *Un film*'s protagonist, Nonat, are those who look to judge them based on their identities, or perceptions thereof, rather than innate potential. In another letter penned the same month, Català explains to Narcís Oller that the revelation of the author's identity serves to restrict what the author can say: "A l'obra literària no li posa ni li treu qualitats o defectes de qui l'hagi feta, mes la coneixença de la personalitat de l'autor pot llevar-li a aquest tota mena de llibertat d'acció i dar-li altres mortificacions inevitables" ("A Narcís Oller, 1" 1825) ("The literary work does not gain or lose qualities or defects based on who has made it; rather, the knowledge of the author's personality can take away all types of freedom of action from him and bring him other inevitable humiliation"). When read alongside another letter to Joan Maragall in which she asserts that these limitations are based on her gender and class ("A Joan Maragall, 10" 1797), it becomes clear that the repercussions of making the author's identity public are more significant for

women than men. Despite Català's reticence towards becoming a public spokesperson for women's rights, these letters show how she advocates for a more expansive understanding of who can write and what they can say.

II. Self-Fashioning in *Un film (3.000 metres*)

Similar to Català's authorial persona, but transposed to an exaggerated fictional context, Nonat seeks to self-fashion freely throughout his life and to liberate himself from external controls. "Prou n'hi ha, d'amos" (226) ("Enough masters"), he explains after working in a regular factory job for a time. Even after simply living in one place for too long, he feels the need to recover his freedom (261). In another instance, and with unsubtle imagery, the narrator likens his need for freedom to that of a bird stuck in a cage: "Li calia sentir-se lliure d'una vegada, volar amb l'ala plenament estesa, no topar i retopar seguidament amb els barrots de la maleïda gàbia" (303) ("He needed to feel free once and for all, to fly with outstretched wings, not to keep running into the bars of the damned cage"). Female authors have traditionally employed caged bird imagery to express restrictions on their subjectivity and creative pursuits, as Emily Clark explains (199). As a result, the use of imagery typically associated with women's repression to describe the limitations placed on Nonat serves to position his personal challenges within the larger context of the struggle for women's rights. While his often unethical and/or illegal actions remain far from an autobiographical representation of Català's life, his obsession with escape, freedom, and autonomy logically relates to the restrictive and gendered writing environment in which Català finds herself in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Noucentista-era notions regarding "correct" artistic form operate in different ways to limit cultural production in early-nineteenth century Catalunya. One way in which they function

is by dismissing older styles of writing in favor of new ones. In the prologue to the short story collection that immediately precedes the publication of *Un film*, *Caires Vius* (*Sharp Edges*) (1907), Català writes of the effects of such norms: "Davant per davant del ruralisme—tan infantet, tan incomplet encara!—s'adreça ja com una enemistança, com una amenaça formal, el nonat civilisme, el ciutadanisme...el portaveu de l'esperit poderós i multiforme de les urbs" ("Pòrtic" 595) ("Ruralism — still so young, so incomplete! — already confronts with enmity, as a formal threat, the unborn civism, citizenism…the spokesperson of the powerful and multiform spirit of the metropolis").[47] From Català's perspective, the literati have been too hasty to dismiss the old, rural-oriented *modernisme* and usher in the new urban *noucentisme*. The prologue plays with the idea of new civic-minded society as *nonat*, which can be read as *no nat,* or un-born, or *nonat*, born by Cesarean, which is to say "unnaturally" or abruptly.[48] Like Nonat, Pepa, Carmeta, and the chauffeur who nearly collide on Avinguda Diagonal, this new *civilisme*/civism, which is *noucentisme* called by another name, has arrived at the wrong time, or at least in a manner that is out-of-sync with what still remains to be done with *ruralisme*. Català favors the old, similar to Nonat, who opts for less modern, four-hooved modes of transportation. Català explains that the artistic dogma that accompanies this new *civilisme*/civism to which she alludes will serve as a limitation that leads to weakening, decadence, and finally death ("Pòrtic" 557). Fittingly, after the protagonist is finally jailed for his misdeeds—or rather his lawless, self-directed behavior—, he opts for death rather than confinement. In this prologue, the aforementioned post-script, and *Un film*, Català engages with or makes reference to questions regarding the effects of the

[47] *Ruralisme* describes a style of fiction—especially short stories—that incorporate Realist and Naturalist elements to tell a dramatic, usually tragic, tale that takes place in a rural Catalunya.

[48] By naming the novel's protagonist *Nonat*, Català links this law-dodging fictional character to her theories on *Noucentisme*-as-invasive-species. The name's significance will be discussed more later in the chapter.

untimely and forceful arrival of a new cultural movement. She lays the groundwork for a reading of the novel that attends to how it formally and thematically addresses her relationship with *noucentista* norms.

For both Català and Nonat, ostensibly "perfect" form is something to be manipulated. This stance is evident in Nonat's interactions with one of his first possessions—and first acts of robbery—a bike, "una màquina nova, magnífica, que devia valer molts diners" (237) ("a new, magnificent machine, which must've been worth a lot of money"). In order to disguise his robbery, he dissembles these new wheels, along with "sa vella carcassa" (238) ("the old skeleton") of his other bike and then combines the two:

> Tragué peces de les dues màquines i les canvià, posant les de la vella a la nova, les de la nova a la vella; donà ací i allà qualque cop de martell, fent-hi discrets i reparable abonyegaments, afumà els pulimentats, matant-los-hi la lluïssor; fingí refrecs i soldadures, i quan amb les seves traces i manyes tingué la bicicleta disfressada i envellida de dos anys, respirà satisfet. Ningú, ni el mateix propietari, no era capaç de reconèixer-hi, sota aquella disfressa, l'eina del matí. (238)
>
> (He took off pieces from the two machines and changed them, putting the ones from the old one on the new one, the ones from the new one on the old one, blackening the polish, removing the shine; he faked scratches and soldering, and when through his ingenuity he had disguised the bike and aged it two years, he let out a satisfied exhalation. No one, not even its own owner, was able to recognize the morning's apparatus under that disguise.)

Nonat shows no interest in the functionality—including the capabilities, features, and comfort—of the new bike in comparison with the old. As he takes the new form and makes it look old, his work responds only to his interests. The new bike functions as a model of *noucentista* logic—

perfect beauty and form, and one that attempts to shame those who do not follow its rules, like its rider who snubs Nonat as he speeds past him up a hill. Nonat's later seizure of this bike calls to mind Català's firm grasp on the norms of the new literary society, while his tinkering with the bike parallels Català's self-proclaimed philosophy on writing: "El meu credo artístic és l'eclecticisme desenfrenat" (Garcés 1749) ("My artistic credo is uninhibited eclecticism"). Eclecticism, or the practice of combining elements from pre-existing styles ("Eclecticism"), conflicts with the Mediterranean traditionalism espoused by *noucentistes* because it need not respond to practical or utilitarian demands. Analogously, Nonat's reworked bike adds no functionality to his ride, but rather aesthetically re-envisions and hybridizes its form.

Català's work also resembles Nonat's bicycle maintenance in that they both fashion something new with old flair. Joan Fuster and Domènec Guansé consider Català's work belated, asserting that she adopts literary movements, such naturalism, decades after they are first in use (Fuster 74; Guansé, "Un film" 655). However, by bringing these modes into the Catalan context and adapting them to new surroundings, Català fashions a novel product. In this way, the work that Nonat performs on the stolen bicycle evokes a coded *ars poetica* of Català's approach to literary production, founded on the satisfaction of personal aesthetic preferences and the appropriation and revisioning of both new and old elements.

While Nonat's cunning transformation of the bicycle passes undetected, Català's text will raise eyebrows for its form. Català foresees and attempts, to a degree, to counter the polemic surrounding the novel's form in its prologue. Her preface serves to show a stance on literary and political norms that is at once implicated and interested, yet also, paradoxically, detached and unfettered. By asking her reader to rid himself of his expectations ("Deu te guard" 169-170), the text reflects the author's now-renowned false modesty. This strategy typically seeks the readers'

approval through performed humility. Yet, Català also shows a certain disregard for the readers' opinions when she declares that this work need not be "good" or anything other than what it is, and indicates "no t'encaparris i m'encaparris ultra mesura amb el que en ella trobis a mancar o a sobrar" ("Deu te guard" 169) ("Do not encumber yourself or encumber me excessively with what you find lacking or superfluous"). In a cultural milieu that prizes the well-made work, Català shows her reader that she is aware of what critics will consider the novel's faults—its simplicity, messiness, hybridity, and arbitrariness—and that she is going to publish it regardless (Kramsch 226; "Deu te guard" 170).

Although Català singles out these ostensibly negative traits of her novel as a pre-emptive defense, her contemporary critics will still indict her for writing exactly the type of novel that she promises in the prologue: one that is arbitrary, digressive, and occasionally implausible. Guansé's frustration with a style of writing that "neglects" the plot reflects his conception of what a novel is supposed to do, concretely: tell a unified story, concisely, with a strong argument ("Un film" 655). A novel with a looser structure and unexpected pacing is a problematic art form for the critic.

Furthermore, Guansé and Bosch take issue with the subtitle *novel·la-film* because they posit that *Un film* has more in common with another genre: the *fulletí*, a type of serialized novel (Bosch 374; Guansé, "Un film" 655). The critics' label, though, follows circular logic when one recalls that early twentieth century film shares many traits with the oft-maligned but still popular *fulletí* genre that precedes it, including subplots, melodrama, and sensationalism, according to Bartrina ("Cinema" 216). In any case, the novel's relationship with this other offending genre remains a liability because of the negative effects with which both are associated. Stephanie Sieburth insists that as a mass cultural form, serialized novels are "assumed to lead to

corruption" and also serve as a metaphor for a working class that is arriving at a level of organization that may threaten social order (6). The chosen form of the novel thus points to artistic rebellion by employing popular mass cultural genres shunned by cultural reformers.

Català's form is also important because it is deeply rooted in the context of a modern Barcelona that is caught between conservative reforms that are based on a perceived classical, Greco-Roman tradition on the one hand and the new technologies arriving to the city from northern and transatlantic neighbors. Film is a prime example of one such innovative technology. Neither traditional nor Catalan, film culture nonetheless flourishes in Barcelona much to the chagrin of notable Catalans such as Joan Maragall, and especially those associated with *noucentista* reforms, such as Eugeni d'Ors and Antoni Rovira i Virgili (González López 34-35). Cinema is considered an "art grofollut de les masses" (Capmany 1865) ("crude art of the masses"), a factor that contributes to its early prestige deficit. Other critical assessments are even less forgiving. Guansé, for instance, declares that cinema "no ofereix gaires suggestions ni gaires possibilitats estètiques" ("Un film" 654) ("neither suggests much nor offers many aesthetic possibilities"), a statement that strikes the twenty-first century reader with no small amount of irony. Despite the elitist distaste for this "unsophisticated" foreign import, Barcelona evolves as one of the premier locations in the Spanish state for the development of films and film culture. Joan M. Mingue Batllori notes that the Catalan capital is the epicenter for the production, distribution, and exhibition of films in Spain (292).[49] The title of Català's novel, as well as its episodic and "arbitrary" narrative, pacing, and cliffhangers all reinforce the identification of this novel with forms that are antithetical to the *noucentista* vision for art. *Un film* reflects the success

[49] Four years after the arrival of the Lumière's cinematograph in Barcelona in 1896, there are thirty cinemas in Barcelona; less than two decades later (and still before the publication of *Un film*), this number more than quadruples (González López 25, 30).

of a rapidly growing medium that achieves widespread popularity despite its conflict with *noucentista* ideology, suggesting that the cultural power of art lies in the hands of the artist and her (or his) public, rather than conservative intermediaries.

The novel's formal structure also foreshadows the advent of another popular genre that will support the growth of film culture in Barcelona: cinematic novels that retell film plots for a broad public. Emeterio Diez Puertas explains that starting in the early 1920s, cinematic novels emerge as an immensely popular mass cultural text, like the *fulletí* had decades earlier (338). Barcelona, in conjunction with its role as a city of cinemas, becomes a center for the production of these publications (Diez Puertas 341). Major publications of novelized films begin to take off after 1922, four years after the first *fascicle* of *Un film* is published (Diez Puertas 337).[50] Both cinematic novels and films only increase in importance and visibility in the decades following the publication of *Un film*. Català's use of this modern, decidedly popular—and defiant—form will be further amplified by the message that the novel puts forth: that of the right to self-fashion, to create freely, and to manipulate social norms for personal benefit, all privileges afforded to the individual in modern, multitudinous, and largely anonymous urban contexts.

III. Language, Genre, and Theme in *Un film*

Aside from the novel's formal elements, language use in *Un film* also works to undermine *Noucentista* ideals, specifically those of a linguistically pure Catalunya, by showing the vexed relationship between Catalan and Spanish as well as the use of non-normative Catalan. For reformers, language becomes another form of civil architecture, with "incorrect" Catalan

[50] Other film magazines are contemporaneous with *Un film*, concretely *El mundo cinematográfico* (1918), *El cine* (1911-1929), and "Grandes Films Misteriosos" (1916). See: (Diez Puertas 336, 338). Pío Baroja publishes a similarly titled, though thematically different, *Novela-Film* in 1929.

threatening to weaken the foundations of a modern Catalunya. The language employed by both the characters and Català herself is representative of modes of speech that create cause for their concern. For one, the novel shows instances of code-alteration, or the unintentional slippage of Spanish words into Catalan sentences (Vila-Pujol 73). Nonat's colleague Peroi parrots what he has seen in the paper, proclaiming that: "l'*era de l'obrero és l'era de la igualdat*" (emphasis in original 218) ("the *worker's era is the era of equality*"). Peroi's speech includes Spanish (*obrero*), normative Catalan (*l'era*), and non-normative Catalan (*la igualdat*). This chaotic mixture blends, both linguistically and politically, unequal parts: Spanish and Catalan, the working class and those with political power.[51] Peroi utters this phrase at the end of a lengthy statement about his struggles with a potential love interest, who, despite her conspicuous poverty, seeks a wealthier suitor. In this way, the blending of Spanish and Catalan signifies the many ways in which society has already become a hodgepodge: lower classes continue to attempt to break rank and marry up and mass-cultural products, such as a newspaper circulating Marxist ideologies, have reached and corrupted the working classes. Peroi's words serve to show that neither language, nor reading publics, nor socioeconomic class structures remain unadulterated.

Spanish is also used as part of what is often a labored attempt to appear more distinguished, which evidences the ongoing struggle to legitimate the use of Catalan as a language of high culture.[52] When Nonat attempts to use Spanish as part of his performance as a wealthy *cavaller*, his language remains "repropi i deslluït" (375) ("unruly and tarnished"), according to the narrator, as if his speech shared the qualities of a recalcitrant horse and an

[51] See also: (Català, *Un film* 274, 376) for examples of code-alteration.

[52] See also: (Català, *Un film* 288, 362-63) for examples of class posturing.

unkempt knight. On another occasion, Nonat avoids using Spanish in an attempt to save face (392). If Catalan had achieved the high culture status to which cultural reformers aspired, it would not be so shameful to show such little mastery of Spanish. Nonetheless, language largely remains a class issue, with Spanish being associated with the educated and moneyed society, and Catalan with its inverse. Those who speak fluent Spanish in *Un film* are members of the aristocracy (285), judges (287), or those who have resided for an extended time in a Spanish-speaking region of the country (421), which is to say that *Un film* does little to undermine the aforementioned situation of diglossia. Instead, it holds a mirror close to the uncomfortable reality of high and low language in Catalunya, with the autochthonous tongue consistently portrayed as a more modest mode of speech.[53]

Analogous to how these characters challenge the linguistic reality desired by early-twentieth century policymakers, Català, too, contests language norms, which is particularly evident in reviews of her work.[54] Early reviewers critique the author's Catalan as one of the most offensive characteristics of the novel. Enric Bosch declares that her "disbarats de lèxic" (375) ("absurd vocabulary") creates a poor effect. Bosch seems to contradict himself, as he earlier states that her spelling is more than compensated for by her (or "his") tremendous vocabulary (374). However, by concluding his review with critique, Bosch privileges the more negative estimation of Català's work. Domènec Guansé's review shows an even greater sense of desperation: "Tot el treball de depuració de la llengua, del nou-cents ençà, ha estat treball perdut per a aquest escriptor! [...] I, com Ruyra, Víctor Català, amb el seu instint idiomàtic, si es disciplinés, podria esdevenir un dels nostres clàssics" ("Un film" 656) ("All of the work from the

[53] Àngela Bagués also observes this situation of diglossia in the novel ("Des dels marges" 129).

[54] For a list of these linguistic goals, see (Grau 267).

nineteenth century onward to purify the language has been work lost on this writer! […] And, like [Joaquim] Ruyra, with his idiomatic instinct, if [Català] disciplined himself, he could become one of our classics." A paternalistic tone underlies Guansé's lamentations of Català's inability to follow the rules, which reflects what Arkinstall calls the "virile qualities" of the *noucentista* project to clean up a disorderly, feminized *modernisme* (23). Alluding to the "classics," Guansé references the creation of Catalan literary canon and also emphasizes the understood linguistic rules that guard its metaphorical doors. Guansé's comment serves to show a narrow vision for the kind of text assumed to be useful for nation building.

Català's work, on the other hand, demonstrates the opposite: both in form and in message, artistic creation should remain unrestrained. Català responds to this criticism in order to justify the forms of expression that she uses. The author avoids external impositions and normalizing reforms in order to show that language does more than solely communicate a point (i.e. a plot, an idea) but rather that the language itself is the point. As a photo negative of the beautiful language used to discuss beautiful topics encouraged by Eugeni d'Ors and his ilk,[55] Català reclaims the need for messy language and content as legitimate modes of expression. In the aforementioned public post-script in *L'avi Muné*, Català relates linguistic and moral freedom:

> En lloc dels atardaments delectables de la contemplació beata, les celeritats nervioses de l'impuls dinàmic desfermat; en lloc dels casticismes propis dels ambients purs, l'allau turbulent dels mitjos intervinguts per tota mena d'elements aleatoris així lingüístics com morals; en lloc d'una austeritat poc menys que religiosa, per la que tota transgressió percebuda fibla com un pecat mortal, una llarguesa indulgent, una lògica inexigència de puritanismes desfiguradors. En una paraula: la lliure expansió d'un home per a una nova

[55] See: (Bilbeny 50-52) on *bellesa* in *noucentisme*.

> expressió novel·lística, que obeïa a les lleis particulars, a un sentiment de *propietat* determinada, diversa de l'altra, però tan legítima com la que més. ("Parlant" 402)
>
> (Instead of the delightful dawdling of beatific contemplation, the nervous celerity of the unbridled dynamic impulse; instead of the typical purisms of refined environments, the turbulent flood of interference by all types of random elements, linguistic and moral; instead of a practically religious austerity, through which all perceived transgression stings like a mortal sin, an indulgent largess, a logical laxity of disfiguring puritanism. In a word: a man's free evolution towards new novelistic expression, that follows one's own laws, a feeling of certain *propriety*, different from the other, but as legitimate as any).

Català characterizes the two schools of thought, which are associated with *noucentisme* and *modernisme*, in terms of both piety and velocity—or lack thereof. The former is contemplative, and austere to the extent that it even disfigures. The latter is dynamic and evolving, rapid and random and most importantly, tolerant. In this response, the style of her work—specifically the eclectic language use and irregular narrative pacing—is linked to the content—concretely, the incorporation of what Català calls random moral elements. In the context of *Un film*, these elements exist in the form of the characters' behaviors, which run the ethical gamut—from petty theft to grand larceny, from desire to murder, from disguise to impersonation. Because of the close association between language and morality that Català describes in her post-script, these examples of immoral/lawless behavior serve to reinforce the message of linguistic freedom. Català looks for diversity in style and content to be respected and valued as a valid mode of artistic creation.

The novel employs formal elements of genre and language alongside thematic elements such as class and gender in order to underscore non-conformity as a method of rebellion against

noucentista dictums on ideal behavior. As Castellanos cites, *noucentistes* are preoccupied with order in every area of city life ("Barcelona" 134). Their vision of a model metropolis relies on what Arkinstall calls "class and gender stability" (41-42), which is to say the fulfillment of traditional (and hierarchical) roles. In *Un film*, however, the modernizing economy in Barcelona allows for an uncomfortable amount of flux. The protagonist moves into and between "classified" spaces associated with different social echelons because of his changing income level. The term "classified spaces" refers to areas segregated by social class (e.g. a working class pub, a white tablecloth restaurant) and/or ones that reinforce other methods of categorization such as gender or beliefs. The following section analyzes two examples of these classified spaces: the Liceu theatre and city restaurants. In that these locales are recreational, public, and performative, they emerge as an important marker of Nonat's sense of success in his project to move up in society. His presence in the theatre calls attention to the importance of the performance of high class and its implications on perceptions of his masculinity. Nonat experiences conflicting feelings about belonging in a space designed to display the wealthy, which points to the complicated relationship between appearance and substance. In parallel to his theatre attendance, Nonat's patronage of restaurants draws attention to the constructed and subjective nature of taste and class.

An examination of the role of the theatre in Catalan society at the time of *Un film* reveals that it is the space most representative of well-heeled society, according to Àngela Bagués ("Des dels marges" 126), which is why Nonat's access to it carries a significant symbolic weight. Teresa M. Sala asserts that in Barcelona's principal theatre, the Liceu, the seats become a stage upon which to display wealth conspicuously (51). Ample gaslights—2,500 in total—illuminate the Liceu in the mid-nineteenth century, even during performances, serving "to allow the elite

uninterrupted enjoyment of its own image," according to Resina (54-55). By 1894, over 1,000 electric lights brighten the room (Huguet 164). When the Liceu is updated around 1900, one critic, Joaquim Pena, even complains that the renovations do more to display the audience than the performance (142). The theatre thus becomes the public platform *par excellence* for social posturing.

At the Liceu, one's entry is nearly as important as one's presence. The novel describes in some detail two such entries, which showcase Nonat's changing economic status and ability to attract the gaze of other patrons. Initially, Nonat attempts to dress the part of the bourgeoisie and enters through the Liceu's main doors for the first time, newly—albeit temporarily—enriched by his weekly salary. His behavior betrays his still-nagging sense that he may not measure up: he only steps in the theatre when cloaked by a cluster of other theatregoers, "com si tots fessin colla" (273) ("as if they were all one troupe"). Nonat's lack of confidence obliges him to hide himself, a behavior that acts at counter-purposes to his principal goal to be noticed and accepted as pertaining to high-class society. This theatre entry resembles, in some ways, Català's first submission of a work to the *Joc Florals* discussed in the previous chapter. Català enters the literary competition, like Nonat enters the theatre, as an unknown writer and surrounded by a host of other works. It is not until later that she will publish on her own, similar to Nonat's grander entry on his own the second night at the theatre.

One week after Nonat's shrouded main-door entrance, a change in his economic position brought on by a promotion brings with it a new attitude that will affect his second entrance to the theatre. This entrance demonstrates his assimilation of bourgeois values, seen in how Nonat exhibits a behavior that he once found annoying—he arrives late. Nonat looks to attract attention and to put on airs that such spectacles are a habitual indulgence: "Quan entenia menys d'aquelles

coses, l'irritava sentir a deshora cops de porta o trepig d'un recatament fictici, sense recat, però més tard li féu goig aquella manca de pressa, aquell menyspreu de tip, per l'espectacle llargament conegut, aquell senyorívol no aprofitar fins les engrunes de la cosa cara" (284). ("When he understood less of those things, it irritated him to hear belated knocks at the door or indiscreet, feigned-soft footsteps. Later, though, he was delighted by that lack of hurry into the show that was plenty well known, that contempt for overstuffing, that gentlemanly not squeezing out every last drop of the expensive thing"). Through a practice of premeditated waste, Nonat enacts what Lisa Tiersten calls "distance from need" (9). In this condition, one has such unfettered access to abundance that s/he wants for nothing (a trait recognizable even today in the upper-class, twenty-first century disciples of "minimalism" who are able to rid themselves of their possessions only because they can easily acquire them again if needed). Nonat shows that he recognizes that part of appearing wealthy is not simply being in the theatre, but rather not needing to be in the theatre—at least punctually. His leisure time should be so abundant that he would be in no hurry to get to a show that he could have already seen a few times or more. Here, Nonat becomes a more effective imitator of the upper classes by behaving as if he has access to excessive time, money, and entertainment.

Before others opine on Nonat's presence, he completes a self-assessment of his performance of class, which highlights his changing economic position. On the first night at the theatre that is described in the novel, Nonat perceives his difference from others with dissatisfaction upon gazing at himself in an entryway mirror: "veié reflexar-se en el gran mirall del replà aquelles figures correctament abillades, amb robes que semblaven d'estrena, i enmig d'elles, fent com una dissonància, una abric de barreja anglesa, folgat, a la moda de la temporada anterior" (273) ("In the grand mirror on the landing, he saw the reflection of those correctly

adorned figures, with clothes that seemed brand new, and in the middle of them, striking some dissonant chord, an English-looking coat, too big, in last season's style"). This scene illustrates the consequences of a burgeoning consumer culture on the construction of one's identity. Nonat presumably acquires his "costume" for the theatre in an economy that makes available the discounted resale of bourgeois fashions. However, this market also makes it more difficult for Nonat to falsify convincingly the current season's trends. His experience shows how a culture of mass-produced fashion allows for a semblance of social mobility by making more apparel options available to a larger populace. This same culture, though, also manages to keep certain styles out of the hands of the masses. Thus, consumer society alternatively facilitates and limits his socio-economic mobility. He only achieves a sense of personal satisfaction with his reflection when dressing in "authentic" high fashion during a later night at the theatre (285). Yet, even then, the economy that enables his rise ultimately offers false promises of freedom and equality, as Jo Labanyi attests in another nineteenth century context (109-110), because the equality offered by modernity runs only as deep as one's costume.

In that he self-critically identifies a difference between his attire and that of the other theatregoers, his behavior reveals his still-nagging sense of unease. The narrator's language objectifies wealthy patrons as "correctly adorned figures," rather than approachable human beings, which further broadens the distance between Nonat and his desired social circle. Given that a primary motive of theatre attendance is to associate with those of a similar class, according to Anna Cazurra (154), Nonat's performance cannot be considered successful until he socializes with others. His entry and his dress-up fail to grant him this additional piece of the puzzle: social capital.

Despite his shortcomings, Nonat does derive some sense of power from attracting the

attention of others, an act that has gender and social implications. Because seeking the gaze of others remains traditionally associated with the feminine, Nonat's behavior challenges gender boundaries as he takes on the role of a fashionable, gazed-at man—a dandy, in other words.[56] The dandy stands in opposition to the functional art sought by *noucentista* social reformers in that this figure rejects "the utilitarian and the instrumental" in favor of the aesthetically pleasing and visually enticing (Felski, *Gender* 96). The narrator reports in no uncertain terms that Nonat's enjoyment of the gaze feminizes him: "[...] ell se sentia sovint espiat per ulls arrecerats darrera els binocles, tan com si ell fos una dona més, i també, com una dona més, sentint-se *obirador*, gustava amb gormanderia d'aquell homenatge—vetejat d'impressions diverses—de què era objecte" (emphasis in original, 285) ("He often felt spied on by eyes shielded behind their binoculars, as if he were another woman, and also, like any other woman, in feeling *noticed*, he gluttonously enjoyed that homage—streaked with different impressions—of which he was object"). Both Nonat—and the narrator—pay close attention to his "frac, ben tallat" (286) ("well-cut dress coat") and his "distinció apresa en el tracte social" (286) ("learned distinction in social dealings"). This narrative spotlight shows precisely how well Nonat can imitate the bourgeoisie in looks and in deed. In order to enjoy this attention, Nonat must passively position himself as something to be seen, and consequently appraised, in a social economy that assesses value based on appearance. As such, his desire to be viewed reaffirms his participation in the society of the spectacle, in which "the gaze of the other is all-important" (Sieburth 37). Becoming the object of the gaze, then, also puts Nonat's reputation at stake. It may bring pleasure and validation, but it also puts him at risk of experiencing the inverse—discontent and censure.

[56] See: (Felski, *Gender* 94-97).

Although the true dandy remained unconcerned with anything below the surface,[57] the novel suggests that substance remains important, especially for Nonat. For instance, in spite of his poor dress on his first trip to the theatre, Nonat still seems to possess the adequate raw material to make something of himself: "Era, senzillament, un desconegut, impenetrable a la tafaneria veïnera, però que tenia, amb la seva elegància natural, la natural seguretat i desimboltura de tots els habituals de la casa" (273) ("He was, simply, a stranger, the neighboring gossip oblivious to him, but who had, with his innate elegance, the natural security and assurance of all of the house regulars").[58] Assertions of his *elegància natural* and *natural seguretat* point to his seemingly innate potential for belonging, suggesting that the distinction between classes emerges as a result of exclusivist social constructs, not from insurmountable inborn inadequacy. At the same time that Nonat engages in this "natural" behavior, the narrator has also—somewhat paradoxically—made clear that Nonat is aware that he is acting. Consequently, the narrative affirms his aptitude while also reflexively drawing attention to how Nonat uses performances of gender, class, and types of *tracte social* to construct and to tell a certain story about himself.

During Nonat's second trip to the theatre, Nonat achieves a superficial success, but still feels internally plagued. An imposter syndrome leads him to feel that he does not belong because his newfound status is not rooted in any distinguished pedigree. His sentiments become clear when he compares himself to another theatregoer, who he perceives as more "real:"

> Aquell home era més jove que ella, més fi, més senyor, com si no portés res sobreposat, com si *tot el que semblava, ho fos* en realitat, per naturalesa […] 'Sempre, sempre el mateix! Tothom de llei, tothom de nissaga, fora ell!' […] Tothom, fora d'ell, tenia un

[57] See: (Moers 13).

[58] For more on gossip, see chapter one.

> pare al seu darrera, de tothom fora d'ell, es podia indagar sense temença l'origen, l'estament... (286, emphasis in original).
>
> (That man was younger than him, finer, more gentlemanly, as if he wore nothing overlaid, as if *all that he seemed, he was* in reality, by his very nature […] 'Always, always the same! Everyone genuine, everyone well-bred, but him!; […] Everyone, but him, had a father behind him, for everyone but him could fearlessly investigate their origins, their class…)

Nonat feels distraught that he possesses nothing below the surface, no high-class lineage. In the conclusion that the other theatre patron is more "real" than he, "as if *all that he seemed, he was*," it escapes Nonat that others besides him could be acting, too. In Judith Butler's terms, Nonat cannot see that there is no original from which these [class] imitations are derived ("Imitation" 21). As a result of this ignorance, his pursuit to defy social classifications remains rife with unease. The protagonist overlooks the fact that everyone is performing something, and that the city itself is a theatre.

Indeed, Barcelona offers a panorama of spectacle and performance. On one occasion, Nonat literally takes a front row seat to this show as he sits on a chair facing at an angle the Passeig de Gràcia, as if to signify both his presence and his distance. From this viewpoint, Nonat watches the passersby: "silenciosament fruïa de l'esplèndid espectacle que oferia en conjunt la gran avinguda i de les primícies de les novetats que, detall a detall, s'exhibien allí com en una gran fira" (233) ("[He] silently enjoyed the splendid spectacle that was offered by the grand avenue and the debut of new fashions that were exhibited there, detail by detail, as in a grand fair"). Barcelona offers a public show and the events that occur within it, from city strolls, to weddings, funerals, and traffic accidents are all apt to turn into a spectacle, in which Nonat will

participate on various occasions. The close relationship between city and theatre in *Un film* serves to emphasize that performances are everywhere on this large urban stage. Similar to its role in nineteenth century novels like *La desheredada*, the theatre continues to be an important—and for Nonat, anxiety-ridden—place for citizens to negotiate their social roles.

Nonat's unease during his public performances is prompted by his lack of noble lineage, a condition reflected in his name, which merits a brief aside. The term *nonat* references one not born "naturally" (vaginally), but rather by cesarean. In that Nonat is abruptly separated from his mother after birth and orphaned, his name reflects the difficult conditions of his infancy and the ensuing—and ultimately disappointing—quest to discover his origins. *Nonat* also denotes innate, as in the aforementioned innate sense of ability and [occasionally feminized] elegance that Nonat possesses, despite his humble origins. Finally, it affirms his lack of pedigree, calling to mind the stigma he experiences as someone "Not born," or "No-nat" to a world of privilege (Bagués, "Des dels marges" 126). His name thus exemplifies some of the personal limitations inherent in his quest for/performance of social mobility at the Liceu and in the metropolis at large.

Around the same time that the Liceu emerges as the so-called "aparador de la burgesia" ("bourgeois showcase") (Muniesa), another type of classified recreational space gains popularity: the restaurant. While Nonat's actions at the theatre are mentioned in studies by Castellanos ("Identitat" 65, 68-69) and Bagués ("Des dels marges" 126, 129), scholars have yet to analyze Nonat's presence in bars and restaurants, which evidences the expansive scope of his aspirational behavior. Like the theatre, the restaurant similarly functions to display social class in the modern urban milieu. Nonat's experiences at more modest eateries recall the boundaries he confronts at the theatre and underscore his capacity to manage his public persona. On the other hand, Nonat's infiltration of high-class establishments draws attention to the ways that high culture and good

taste exist as social constructions rather than substantive realities (Bourdieu 11). Nonat's entry into these spaces thus contests *noucentista* ideals and "prescriptions of cultural good taste" (Arkinstall 20).

In terms of social display, restaurants take on many of the same functions as the theatre. In nineteenth-century France—and beyond—restaurants act as cultural institutions that bolster "the emerging capitalistic culture of consumption" and promote differentiation of both class and gender (Rienti 4). While dining at a tavern is closely associated with working-class men, the emergence of ritzy restaurants in Barcelona around the turn of the twentieth century catered to a higher social echelon (Saumell i Olivella 68, 8). By dining at the most expensive restaurants possible, patrons could demonstrate their acquisitive power (Rienti 7). And, similar to well-lit theatre seats that are designed to be visible, being seen in elite restaurants is almost as important as enjoying them (Rienti 68; Resina 55). In sum, dining choices are intended to be, quite literally, an expression of good taste (Rienti 8).

The first restaurant at which Nonat becomes a regular is called *Grandes comedores de la Cordoniz*, a space that represents his growing buying power and his careful management of his public appearance. A Realist tendency to catalogue seems to guide the narrator's description of other restaurant-goers, (tram operators, book minders, "little" office employees), decorations (chairs, a counter, a big pockmarked and tarnished mirror), and dishes (pitchers of cottage cheese, dusty and lopsided puddings, stewed veal) (262-63). This immersive description—or perhaps a cinematic pan of the scene—showcases the material artefacts associated with this humble social class. The restaurant's nickname, *Câl Sogre* ("In-Law's House"), also underscores its relationship to lower tiers of society. According to Xavier Fàbregas, in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century, the working class often celebrated nuptial dinners at the in-

laws' house because dining out remains out of reach (144). As such, Nonat's ability to afford a restaurant meal distinguishes him from Barcelona's poorest residents, who could not pay for even an economical dish out. Even the price of a beer would have been out of reach for many (Saumell i Olivella 61). This experience, then, "marcà una nova època en la seva vida" (263) ("marked a new chapter in his life"). Nonat's patronage of Câl Sogre serves as a first indicator of his growing economic success.

Because visibility in public spaces is associated with value judgements and gossip, Nonat seeks to manage the extent to which others can see him until he is satisfied with his performance. Even though eating out is a new luxury for Nonat, Câl Sogre is not the place he ultimately imagines himself and as such, he averts the gaze of others there by taking an inconspicuous seat in a corner. This behavior recalls the way he first enters the theatre, blanketed by a crowd of people so as to evade close scrutiny. At another time, Nonat avoids riding his new horse into the city until he has a custom riding suit and has taken enough lessons to look like a real gentleman on horseback (311). His rehearsal of upper-class social practices again evokes the inherent theatricality of a metropolis replete with anonymous citizens posturing for status. Until he can deliver a [near] flawless performance, he continues practicing. It comes as no surprise, then, that before the night during which Nonat feels invisible at the theatre, sitting in the *galliner*, he also eats—also invisibly, one deduces—at Câl Sogre (272). Nonat repeatedly attempts to control the story that he thinks his actions will tell so as not to be limited by the perceptions of others. His actions suggest that public perceptions have the power to limit one's ability to change [social status, in this case].

By protecting his autonomy, Nonat is able to move up in society, a transition reflected in

his choice to eat at a more elegant restaurant, *La Mallorquina*.[59] In *Un film*, Nonat's experience at *La Mallorquina* functions to show how perceptions of good taste (and consequently, high class) are marked by distance from certain traits: [60]

> Un dels sentits que havien trigat més a desvetllar-se en ell, havia estat el del paladar [...] un cop coneguda la diferència de la cuina ordinària a la que no ho era [...] per poc que ho permetés el seu escantellat pressupost, fugia del tall de bacallà sentós [...] i, sobretot, de les riallades franques, de les alegroies disputes a plena veu, de la fressa barroera de vaixella, de les tufarades coents a oliassa, a tabac i a multitud, de les envestides del mosso, del drap confós amb què fregava alhora les taules i les copes, de les periòdiques i filharmòniques aparicions del *cucut* dalt del rellotge, de tot allò que feia la característica placèvola i humil de *Câl Sogre*. (280)
>
> (One of the senses that had taken the longest to awaken in him had been that of the palate […] [O]nce known the difference between ordinary cooking and that which was not […], although his trim budget hardly allowed it, he fled from noisome cod […] and, especially, from the uninhibited laughter, from the joyful disputes at full volume, from the rough clanging of dishes, from the wafting smells of fry oil, of tobacco, and of the multitudes, from the shouts at waiters, from the muddled rag with which tables and glasses were scrubbed simultaneously, from the periodical and orchestral apparitions of the *cuckoo* on top of the clock, from all of that which made up the pleasant and humble character of *Câl Sogre.*)

[59] Rienti observes a similar pattern in Guy de Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* (1885), in which the protagonist Duroy dines in more exclusive restaurants as his "financial success and power" increases (70).

[60] Pierre Bourdieu asserts that taste serves as an indication of class (1-2).

Focalized through the subjective perspective of Nonat, the narrator uses all five senses to evoke the environment of Câl Sogre, revealing common traits of the workaday restaurant experience: intense odors of cod, tobacco, and oil, less-than-optimal hygiene, and high noise level from people, plates, and timepieces. Nonat's immersive observations reinforce class stereotypes and bourgeois superiority by associating the workaday Câl Sogre with a lack of refinement. Class and luxury can be inferred from the relative importance of substance and form (Bourdieu 6). For Câl Sogre's customers, the need to satisfy hunger with affordable "everyday cooking" outweighs the need for aesthetic presentation (6). *La Mallorquina*, on the other hand, is described as the inverse—"that which was not"—implying that form takes precedence over substance there. Because the narrator gives no further information about *La Mallorquina*, Nonat's newfound good taste is characterized only by a distance from poverty, similar to how Nonat seeks to show his distance from need by entering the theatre late. This method of negatively defining good taste as *not* something—e.g. cod, noise or fry oil—makes it more difficult to determine what actually characterizes it. As such, the description of *La Mallorquina* functions as a veiled critique of the snobbery implicit in the idea of good taste.

Un film shows that there exists an imperfect segregation between high-class "good taste" and low-class "bad taste," which calls into question the gospel of *bon gust* preached by *noucentista* intellectuals such as Eugeni d'Ors and Enric Prat de la Riba.[61] High-class spaces are shown to be porous, and not exclusively populated by authentically high-class patrons. As he does at the theatre, Nonat ably infiltrates *La Mallorquina* despite his lack of pedigree, which shows that another currency can be used to gain admission; namely, the ability to effectively imitate class. Simply choosing the right restaurant is sufficient to show one's good taste (Rich

[61] See: (Vidal i Jansà 103, 107).

162). It also becomes clear that taste is ultimately a construct. Upon leaving a *fonda*, a modest dining establishment, the narrator explains: "En una paraula, En Nonat sentia brollar el ell el *gust*, aqueixa beata llum artificial de la civilització, única que enllumena, que fa sorgir de l'obscuritat la veritable senyoria i crea distincions graduades entre els mortals" (337) ("In a word, Nonat felt welling up inside him *taste*, that blessed artificial light of civilization, the only one that illuminates, that brings true gentlemanliness out of the darkness, and creates graded distinctions between men"). In the context of *noucentista* Barcelona, to assert that taste is ultimately contrived and performative is to challenge the precepts that guide the formation of a modern, "masculine" Catalan capital that seeks to be a beacon of cultural light to fellow cosmopolitan capitals of the Mediterranean.

Nonat's ability to break class boundaries in these bars and restaurants is mirrored by his gender-bending behaviors. The narrator reports: "[…] no el temptava res del que solia temptar els altres minyons de la seva edat i condició" (229) ("[…] nothing that usually tempted other young men of his age and class tempted him"), including gambling, arguing, and picking up women.[62] Nonat's shunning of this conduct could be linked to his attempt to appear refined, as occurs during his theatrical "performances." His behavior also serves to show how questions about class boundaries in *Un film* are reflected, magnified, and/or transformed into questions about gender, and vice versa.

By using class to talk about gender, the novel can depict the quest for autonomy without drawing attention to its author's still-subordinate position as a female writer in a male-dominated

[62] Castellanos cites several textual examples of Nonat's disinterest in women ("Identitat" 67). It should be noted that not all women in the novel comply with normative gender roles either, such as the character Maria who "*duia les calces*" (173) ("*wore the pants*," emphasis in original) or the women who are economically self-supporting and live together (213) or the desirous/lusty woman (384).

literary context. The invention of a character who self-consciously experiences and responds to the gaze of others, who attempts to move up in society through deft social performances, and who insists on operating on his own terms functions as a counter-narrative to that put forth by the *noucentista* artistic and cultural movement. Instead of working to regulate form, language, and content, *Un film* suggests that creative flourishing requires breaking free from the chains—both symbolic and literal—at all costs. In this novel, its post-script in *L'avi muné*, and in her correspondence, Català advances her methods of writing by reasserting creative independence regardless of social and cultural standards. Nonat's efforts to defy classifications and assert his freedom by manipulating social expectations at the Liceu and in restaurants become playful, allegorical (but not autobiographical) representations of Català's quest to be both an independent and respected woman writer.

CHAPTER 3: THE LIMITS OF THE MALE [CRITICAL] GAZE

> "'¿Qué la crítica no siempre está a la altura de su misión; que, cojitranca, claudica, más de una vez y no da con el verdadero camino? Esto por sabido se deja […]'"
> (Català, "Víctor Català i la crítica" 13)

Chapters one and two of this dissertation focused on creation-oriented writing methods in Català's novels. This chapter and the following one examine in greater depth the way in which Català's works frame the role of the critic or, in other words, establish within themselves methods of reception. As the introduction elaborated, over the course of her literary career Català regularly responds—in private and in public—to her critics and their assessments of her fictional narratives.[63] These numerous commentaries demonstrate that, for Català, literary reception exists as a conversation between authors and critics in which both parties actively evaluate—and critique—the other's output. This chapter argues that Català, through her texts, performs this assessment in order to regulate a critical apparatus that she perceives as faulty.

When considering the critical reception of Català and her female contemporaries, it is both relevant and necessary to consider issues of gender because of the patriarchal division of social and professional roles in the early decades of the twentieth century. During Català's near century-long lifetime, the practice of publishing literary reviews is particularly segregated, performed almost exclusively by men. The gendered nature of this practice can be detected at many levels of the publishing industry and lasts—at least—until the latter decades of the

[63] See, for instance: (Català, "Pòrtic;" Català, "Víctor Català i la crítica;" Català, "A Narcís Oller 2;" Català, "A Joan Maragall, 1.")

twentieth century (Henseler 12). This imbalance has implications for the types of stories—from the exoticizing to the domesticating—told about the author and the methodology used to tell them.[64] In this chapter, I examine a subset of Català's reception that recurs to methods and metaphors that rely on the visual in order to interpret the author and her work. These methods and metaphors produce and/or mimic a male [critical] gaze on a female body [of work] and support the pre-existing conflation between the lives, bodies, and texts of female authors. The chapter then turns to two of Català's works, the 1907 prologue entitled "Pòrtic" ("Portico") (1907) and the fictional short story "L'Embruix" ("The Curse") (1930), to demonstrate how they critique and thwart the functioning of this critical gaze through their representations of blindness and ignorance. These texts redirect attention from the perceived flaws of Català's literary creations in order to bring to light the faults of an inexperienced and provincial public. In so doing, these works add to Català's writing ethics by censuring the misguided judgments of an under-informed and/or overly moralistic readership.

I. Visual Methods, the Male Gaze, and Images of the Female Author

In the predominantly male-authored criticism of Català's literary texts, an array of references to the visual functions to describe, delineate, and question issues of gender and identity. This pattern is present from start to end in Català's career and in the criticism of many of her female contemporaries as well, as seen in the introduction. One particularly salient example comes from the journalist Baltasar Porcel's 1965 interview of a 96-year old Català. In

[64] Public, published reception of Català's works by other women remains uncommon throughout her lifetime; as first stated in the introduction, most women writers privately comment on her work in a form deemed more appropriate for their gender—personal letters. See: (Ribera Llopis, *Projecció i recepció* 115-131); (Nardi). Two notable exceptions include reviews by Emilia Pardo Bazán ("La nueva generación") and Blanca de los Ríos ("Víctor Català:" "Víctor Català, por Blanca;" "Las mujeres españolas").

the resulting article, "Víctor Català, a contrallum" ("Víctor Català, backlit"), he remarks on some of her works. However, Porcel dedicates the majority of his time to contrasting the image of the aging woman before him and that found in one of Català's self-portraits completed nearly seven decades prior (Illustration 2).[65] Porcel closely analyzes Català's facial features in the drawing in order to connect them to what he understands of her personality:

> [El retrat] la representa bruna, amb un cabell abundant i negre i també amb una fuga d'esbandiment, ulls grossos i obscurs de mirada fixa, boca ben cal·ligrafiada, cara ampla i de línies acusades: una bellesa d'alè romàntic, si no fos per la seva duresa. Una pintura, aquesta, potser amb un regust de Delacroix, i que revela una dona segura de si mateixa, d'un caràcter amb zones misterioses, de voluntat ferrenya, d'una activitat interior ferma, bullent. Ara Víctor Català no deixa endevinar res d'això al seu rostre, potser a causa de l'edat, però jo diria que també a conseqüència d'un constant autodomini. (67)
>
> ([The portrait] represents her brunette, with abundant dark hair tousled about her face, large dark eyes with a fixed gaze, a well-drawn mouth, a broad face with clear lines: a romantically-inspired beauty, if it weren't for her severity. A painting, this one, maybe with an aftertaste of Delacroix, revealing a woman sure of herself, a character with mysterious zones, an ironclad will, a firm, effervescent inner activity. Now Víctor Català doesn't allow one to detect any of that on her face, maybe because of age, but I'd say also due to a constant self-control).

Porcel reads confidence and conundrum, energy and enigma in the earlier portrait. At the same time, he claims that, at present, her face has changed and no longer reveals such traits—though I

[65] Baltasar Porcel does not explicitly mention the work that he references, but given the time frame and finite number of self-portraits that Català creates, the image I have included is the most probable reference.

would argue that *voluntat ferrenya* and *constant autodomini* belong in the same family of exacting self-control. In any case, as Porcel explains the proceedings of the interview, it becomes clearer that he senses that Català has evaded his gaze at both a visual and critical level: "Víctor Català? He sortit una mica perplex de l'entrevista. Penso si no l'envolta un fenomen semblant al del contrallum, que dificulta de veure-la amb precisió i col·loca la seva persona dins un clarobscur atapeït d'interès" (69) ("Víctor Català? I left the interview a little perplexed. I wonder if a phenomenon like a backlight surrounds her, that makes it difficult to see with precision and fixes her persona in a deliberate *chiaroscuro*"). His ironic questioning suggests a confidence that Català's appearance indeed conceals something, and also provokes the reader to speculate about what that something might be. Porcel concludes his article by asking: "On és realment la personalitat de Víctor Català?" (69) ("Where is the persona of Víctor Català really?"), an inquiry that serves to prompt further curiosity and skepticism.

Porcel's self-annotations provide one of the clearest examples of a critical assessment of Català's [assumed-to-be] deliberately obfuscating identity performance. Early in her career, Català acknowledges such a masquerade (and even the delight it brings her) in private correspondence with Joan Maragall, as mentioned in chapter two ("A Joan Maragall, 8" 1794). Given this history, Porcel's conjectures do not necessarily miss the mark in strict biographical terms. However, Porcel constructs his principal analysis on the basis of a visual inspection of her physical form. His article thus exemplifies the assumption that vision should function as a privileged method of knowing, especially when men look at women, or male critics at female artists. In other words, one's appearance should make their inner world legible and apprehensible, which Rita Felski describes as "the linked imperatives of scopophilia and epistemophilia" (*Gender* 194).

For Català and other women authors of her time, this assessment method often leads critics to put forth misguided and distracting assumptions regarding the author's gender and/or sexual identity because of implicit links between female bodies, lives, and texts. In the introduction, for instance, I cite several examples of Català's near contemporaries, including Rosalía de Castro (Galicia, 1837-1885), Emilia Pardo Bazán (Galicia, 1851-1921), and Alfonsina Storni (Argentina, 1892-1938), being described as unattractive by their literary critics—in other words, relieved of one of the perceived hallmarks of socially sanctioned femininity: beauty. As a result of their intellectual work and their choice to write in and for the public eye, a number of Hispanic female authors comes to be seen as physically deviant or "less than." On the other hand, Christine Henseler, in her study of gender and the contemporary Spanish publishing industry, has shown that women authors who are seen as "attractive" are subject to less serious commentary about their work (3), which is to say that any mention of an author's physique—unless explicitly related to the content of her work—serves to divert attention from formal critique.

This method of evaluation can be traced to a long history of viewing women as excessively embodied, which is to say, ruled by their physiological and corporeal existence. For instance, mid-century feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir opens *The Second Sex* by pronouncing that women are seen as a composite of their reproductive organs: "Woman? Very simple, say those who like simple answers: She is a womb, an ovary; she is a female: this word is enough to define her" (21). And while a broad range of discourses—including philosophical and feminist ones—associate the body with the female, the mind remains squarely in the male domain, as Judith Butler underscores (*Gender Trouble* 17). This distinction (male: mind; female: body) has implications for the entry of women writers, including Català, into a modern literary

economy. Since well before the start of Català's literary career, it is seen as medically risky for women to use their minds in professional and intellectual contexts, according to Rachel Mesch (5). Consequently, the work of nineteenth-century women writers becomes marginalized, presumably because its acceptance would entail wide-ranging social repercussions (Mesch 5). Furthermore, in that the work women do with their minds has potentially negative repercussions for their bodies—including sterility or hysteria (Mesch 16, 18)—it becomes unhealthy for women to use their minds. The body of the female intellectual comes to be entangled in a web of sexuality, deviance, and pathology, only to be deciphered and subordinated by the male gaze. Català's works, I argue, allude to and complicate this web. They draw attention to the faultiness—and fragility—of the cultural schemata that limit the interpretation of women's artistic production to the boundaries of their bodies.

Reading women's lives [and bodies] through their art is a widespread and persistent practice that sustains attempts to regulate the lives of women together with their works. In an impulse to control issues related to the female body (and mind) and its operations, the body serves as "the prime text to be studied by male intellectual authorities" (Mesch 7). Mesch references the nineteenth-century French context; nonetheless this mode of examination remains resilient, lasting well into mid-century Catalunya (and even into present-day practices of literary criticism).[66] In the aforementioned interview by Porcel, Català's physique becomes, unmistakably, the text to be studied; the body is the message. Porcel's text demonstrates an effort to determine Català's "true" personality from an artistic representation—in this case, an

[66] Current print journalism continues to subject female authors to invasive criticism and to miscategorize their creative fictional work. As at the turn of the twentieth century, literary critics attempt to limit access to certain themes/genres for women writers. Now, though, instead of blockading themes deemed too dark or overtly sexual, critics seem to be restricting the participation of women writers in genres considered "too creative" such as fictional short stories. See: (Attenberg), (Garber).

impressionistic self-portrait sketch. In his analysis, Porcel ascribes devious intention to the modifications in her facial structure. He downplays the most obvious reason for Català's evolving visage—age—by qualifying it with an adverb implying uncertainty: *potser* (maybe). As cited in the introduction, similar attributions are made in the case of Català's Uruguayan contemporary, Delmira Agustini. Critics over-read the significance of their bodies and the typical effects of the aging process in order to try to determine aspects about their mind or intentions.

II. The Construction of Methods of Critical Reception and Why It Matters for Women Writers

As an alternative to constructing discourses of embodied deviance,[67] a second—and by now, well known—critical method to address with the problem of writing women is to put them back in their place: the home. Català herself participates in this project, as demonstrated by her strategic use of feminizing discourse discussed in chapter one. This section provides a brief historical overview of critics' domesticating stories about women authors and the effects thereof. It argues that these stories influence our perception of Català's role as a vocal opponent of a critical apparatus that she found lacking on more than one occasion, as this chapter's epigraph clearly demonstrates. By reassessing Català's responses to her public in her correspondence and in "Pòrtic," this section shows that the author addresses the biased lenses of her readers, their cultural shortcomings, and their limited (and ignorant) perspectives. In short, Català undermines the perceived authority of her reading public by calling out their deficiencies. As a result, their role as de facto cultural regulators is diminished.

[67] This term comes from Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline Urla, which they define as "the historically and culturally specific belief that deviant social behavior […] manifests in the materiality of the body, as a cause or effect, or perhaps as merely a suggestive trace" (2).

The gendered gaze marking critical assessments of Català and her female contemporaries frequently leads to descriptions of the women and their texts that reinforce stereotypically feminine traits.[68] María del Carmen Simón Palmer asserts that early twentieth-century critics tend to evaluate the works of Spanish women in terms of the author's beauty, her unassuming behavior, and/or her lack of real writerly chops, rather than in terms of her work's literary merit (42). In other words, these readers tell stories about literature that underplay the intellectual—if not also physical and material —agency of women writers. Furthermore, within the proliferation of narratives of Spanish literary history that emerge around the turn of the twentieth century, there exists a mode of talking about women's writing that reinforces their fulfillment of "proper gender roles," which is to say, their passivity and domesticity (Sullivan 33).[69] On the other hand, those women authors considered to be *combativas* are presented in incomplete ways, and their works are omitted from major literary compilations published in the first decades of the twentieth century as Raquel Gutiérrez Sebastián attests (105). As a result of these practices, predominant narratives of Spanish (and Catalan) literary histories frequently present a domesticated and domesticating view of women's writing, though some recent scholarship has begun to counter this perspective.[70]

[68] Evidencing its pervasiveness, this gendered gaze is not entirely absent from criticism written by women. See: (Bonnín i Socias 148-150).

[69] See also Begoña Sáez Martínez's analysis of the domesticating critical discourse surrounding Concepción Arenal's work (44).

[70] Rebecca Ingram, for instance, cites that critics have begun to reassess perceptions of Carmen de Burgos as a "lightweight writer of sentimental romances" (1145).

The biographies and biographical sketches of Català that describe her as *modesta* or unassertive follow the domesticating trend.[71] Pilar V. Rotella, for instance, summarizes that "According to all sources, she was quiet and self-effacing. […] She was in many ways a typical Catalan 'senyoreta' (young lady), kind and courteous, but also distant and reserved in matters both personal and artistic" ("Naturalism" 134-35). Rotella depicts a version of Català that is both domestic and humble, which is accurate, to some extent, given the years that Català spends caring for an ailing mother at home and her refusal to present herself at certain prize ceremonies.[72] This portrayal, though, does not acknowledge that Català most often displays these traits when praised, which allows her to avoid drawing attention to her achievements.[73] Similar to Rotella, Rosa Maria Esteller i Elias states of Català that: "El seu comportament social va deixar ben patent que era educada i modesta, fugint sempre de tota mena de vanitats i conflictes" (236) ("Her social behavior made it very clear that she was polite and modest, always fleeing from all types of vanities and conflicts"). This near hagiographical representation overly simplifies (and sanctifies) Català's professional behavior. Given that both of these articles were written in the last two decades by accomplished scholars, the stickiness of discourses of domesticity becomes especially apparent. However, to characterize Català as typically or always reserved in artistic matters is to overlook the way that Català responds to harsh criticism of her work in ways ranging from courteous to downright snarky. Opposing accounts of the intersection between Català's career as a published writer and her attempts to protect her privacy do exist, though, as will be shown. The discrepancies between the two interpretations can be attributed to

[71] See: (Oller i Rabassa 109).

[72] On her refusal to pick up her prize at the 1898 *Jocs florals*, see: (Català, "Dates" 1426-27). On her care of her mother see, for instance: (Català, "A Narcís Oller, 2" 1826-27).

[73] See, for instance, Català's performance in the aforementioned 1965 interview with Porcel.

Català's evolving construction of her public and private identity, in which she demonstrates both restraint and pluck (Good 26).

III. Building a Methods of Reception in Letters and in "Pòrtic"

In order to analyze the ethics of reception that Català's texts put forth, it is necessary to acknowledge her unequivocal involvement in matters related to her own reception. An assessment of authorial behavior remains fragmentary without examining a variety of ways in which female authors exhibit their writerly agency. To this end, Jennifer Cognard-Black and Elizabeth MacLeod Walls propose that for female authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the practice of letter writing can serve to promote the growth of professional networks, as well as foster, present, or contest critical reception (4). Furthermore, in the face of social, cultural, and familial limitations, letters provide a flexible means of engagement with literary society in that they make commentary on public issues from a private location (Cognard-Black and MacLeod Walls 5). In the case of Català, ample epistolary documentation evidences her efforts to establish literary dialogue and monitor her publications, among other professional activities, according to Juan M. Ribera Llopis ("En torno a Caterina" 154). Even though Català did not speak out about her reception in person in public settings, her letters allow her to intervene directly with the most influential [male] culture makers of her day, including Narcís Oller and Joan Maragall. In that these letters put forth cohesive philosophies of critical reading, resonating with those expressed in the prologue "Pòrtic" and the short story "L'Embruix" (as will be shown in the following sections), they form the foundation for the methods of reception that Català's work constructs.

Català's correspondence makes evident that she actively participates in and manages her literary reception, sometimes even in the same letter in which she claims to be isolated and overwhelmed by her obligations for her mother's care. In a missive to Oller dated January 15, 1903, before insisting on her consuming preoccupation with her mother's poor health, Català asserts:

> No em planyia jo, en la carta a què vostè es refereix, de la crítica del senyor Maragall, perquè parteixo del principi que el que es dóna al públic, el públic (i amb ell la crítica), pot judicar-ho com millor li sembli. El que a mi em va doldre fou que, amb motiu del llibre, es tragués a relluir l'autor i que les condicions particulars d'aquest fossin l'esca de l'enrenou que el llibre ha mogut; si no hagué donat la casualitat d'ésser fet per una dona (i en aquesta terra en què les dones no són aficionades a escriure), s'hauria tractat del llibre en si i prou; que era el que jo desitjava. ("A Narcís Oller, 2" 1826-27)
>
> (In the letter to which you refer, I wasn't lamenting Senyor Maragall's criticism because I subscribe to the belief that what is given to the public, the public [and with it, the critics], can judge how it sees best. What pained me was that, because of the book, the author was brought to light and his particular conditions were the kindling for the commotion that the book caused. If it hadn't happened to be written by a woman [and in this land in which women aren't keen on writing], it would've been about the book itself and just that, which is what I wanted.)

Català—with alternating gendered references to herself—purports to recognize the rights of critics to judge a work as they see fit, yet based on her defensive epistolary responses to her critics, Català cannot be said to have actually accepted such free judgment. For instance, Català maintains in this letter that she made allowances for Joan Maragall's negative review of *Drames*

rurals. However, as is discussed in chapter 4, by this time Català has already written another letter to Maragall (dated two months prior—November 16, 1902) ("A Joan Maragall, 1" 1784-85). In this letter, she does in fact critique Maragall's assessment of her work. These letters, then, show that Català assiduously manages specific aspects of her literary reception, despite her claims to the contrary.

Furthermore, in the letter to Oller, Català acknowledges the gendered dynamics of reading, in which women's works spark interest because of curiosity regarding questions of identity. Català denounces these methods in order to reorient the critical focus to the work rather than the person that wrote it. In this way, her letter to Oller functions as an abbreviated methods of reception in which she cites the critic's primary obligation to respect the boundaries of the author's personal life because of the potential for certain methods of critical reading to provoke social scandal. By responding directly to her critics' gendered methods and laying out these rules of engagement, Català's texts work to minimize the potential for criticism to produce scandal, which, as she claims on several occasions, would be personally, intellectually, and professionally inhibiting.[74] In this way, Català's ethics of reception actively promotes an environment more amenable to the participation of women writers by working to keep the conditions of their personal lives out of the picture.

Català's writing methods not only function to make space for women authors in general, but also for herself in particular, a project that underlies the prologue "Pòrtic." The text has most often been read as a response to critics that look down on the perceived belatedness of Català's *ruralista* brand of storytelling, which exists in opposition to the *Noucentista* desire to bring forth

[74] Català references these potential and real effects in other letters. See, for instance: (Català "A Narcís Oller, 1" 1825); Català "A Narcís Oller, 2" 1826; Català, "A Joan Maragall 10" 1797).

a modern, cosmopolitan *Catalunya-ciutat*.[75] More than simply defend Català's genre of choice, this prologue also serves to characterize the flaws of her public in terms of their visual and critical myopia. Like the open letter-*cum*-post script published in *L'avi muné* (examined in chapter two), Català also manipulates expectations regarding form in this text. In this case, she uses a prologue/open letter hybrid to indict Catalan culture for prematurely and incompetently attempting to regulate artistic production. Rather than comply with the typical conventions of a prologue by addressing the themes and stories in the collection at hand, "Pòrtic" can better be read as an essay that critiques those who purport to know by seeing. Simultaneously, "Pòrtic" exploits anxieties about a lack of meaningful cultural development in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Catalunya.

Around the time of the publication of this prologue, Catalan *modernista* reformers aspire "to break with a traditionalist, regionalist Catalan culture and make it national and modern" (Arkinstall 18). In order to achieve this goal, they must overcome inhibiting social and cultural conditions. To a certain extent, these conditions are easily quantifiable and include staggering illiteracy rates and a general scarcity of recent Catalan language literary production.[76] However, there also exist more subjective signs of underdevelopment, including a perceived lack of "culture" or capacity for artistic insight as well as the public's ongoing subscription to superstitious beliefs such as witchcraft.[77] As turn-of-the-century *modernista* reformers give way to their twentieth-century *noucentista* counterparts, the developed metropolis increasingly

[75] See: (Cascuberta, "Víctor Català" 43) (Gavagnin 233) (Bartrina, *Voluptuositat* 122). Dolors Madrenas Tinoco and Juan M. Ribera Llopis briefly acknowledge that the prologue also serves to justify a place for Català in the early twentieth-century cultural context (283).

[76] On literacy statistics in 1900-era Spain, see: (Capel Martínez 363, 370).

[77] On witchcraft in Catalunya, see: (Coll Monteagudo), (Vivó), (Martín Roig), and Mercè Rodoreda's fictional commentary in *Del que hom no pot fugir* (115-16).

becomes the locus for utopian visions of Catalan advancement, as mentioned in chapter two, and many aspects of Catalunya's rural identity become even more shunned (Arkinstall 19).[78] On this basis, Català's *ruralista* stories are censured.[79]

Català takes advantage of this context to make her charge that it is the newly emerging Catalan readership that is provincial and green—not her stories. In her prologue "Pòrtic" she—rather humorously, if not pedantically—asserts of Catalunya: "li sortí el públic de primera fornada pretensioset, restret, encongit i esparveradís, sense discerniment [...], un veritable publiquet *provincià*" (602, emphasis in original) ("the first batch of audience members turned out to be a bit pretentious, restricted, naive, fearful, with no discernment […] a truly provincial little public"). In modern [American] English, "provincial" might also be translated as "country," connoting an undereducated or otherwise under-enlightened social group. In this way, Català's use of the epithet *provincià* turns the aim of the insult back at her critics. In other words, Català's rural stories are more erudite than her urban—but intellectually "provincial"—readers. Her use of diminutives ("pretensioset," "publiquet") infantilizes her public, a move that offers a secondary benefit of elevating her own position. The description circumscribes the authority of their viewpoints by emphasizing their naïveté.

In a similar vein, Català clarifies that immorality does not inhere in art, but rather emerges as a function of a [particularly prudish] critical apparatus. She asserts, for instance, that "la nuesa no és mai immoral per si, sinó pel gest que se li dóna" (605) ("nudity is never immoral in itself, but rather because of the expression that it is given"). At a time when proper literary

[78] See also: (Cornellà-Detrell, *Literature* 11).

[79] While *Noucentistes* do not dismiss all rural stories, Català's stories are particularly rebuked because of their dark (and most certainly anti-utopic) vision of rural life. See: (Castellanos, *Josep Carner* 104), (Marfany, *Reflexions* 66).

content is up for debate, Català's prologue troubles the act of looking and evaluating, a pattern that reemerges in the short story "L'Embruix." Given the association between immoral work and the deviant female body, Català's statement on nudity reclaims the morality of all types of artistic expression. She de-authorizes the use of criticism as a mechanism to judge the artist's behavior and makes it instead a reflection of the critic's perceptive abilities. By extension, it reasserts Català's own good social standing as an author that writes stories that can be considered respectable, even when their topics evade the safe umbrella of the "domestic" or the "feminine." Català's statement reflects a common critical tendency to redeem the fallen social standing of female authors, a process often carried out via a legitimation of their day-to-day activities and behaviors (Sáez Martínez 43). However, rather than focus on her own actions and redouble attention on her own biography, Català sanctions her own work in this prologue by bringing her critics under the microscope.

Throughout "Pòrtic" Català recurs to visual metaphors in order to call attention to her critics' flaws. She emphasizes the dual role of her audience to see and to evaluate by framing the public's position as an "espectadora-judicadora" (601) ("spectator-judge"). With this reference, Català critiques her readers in terms of their faulty perspectives. In another instance, the author draws parallels between "la curtesa de mires, resultat de l'estretor d'horitzons" (601) ("shortsightedness caused by narrow horizons") and "l'abundor immoderada d'escrúpols" (601) ("the immoderate abundance of scruples"). These parallels imply that being easily scandalized results from being undereducated. Consequently, they link Catalunya's "backwards" culture to "myopic" and moralistic critical gazes that fail to acknowledge broader perspectives and possibilities. Visual metaphors reappear when she lambasts contemporary critics' ignorance by likening their opinions to those of "cegues perdudes" (600) ("the wandering blind"). In response

to sociocultural frameworks that make it near pathological for women to use their minds, Català shifts the focus (and the pathology) back onto her critics. As with the "provincial" label, Català turns the arrow of deficiency away from her and back towards her readers.

Català's repeated reference to blindness for the purpose of signifying deficiency is a double-edged sword. This use of visual metaphors emphasizes that the sense of sight becomes, as in other works of Western literature, a privileged symbol of knowing and unknowing (Tova Linett 56). It is first and foremost ableist, reinforcing simplistic perceptions of the [mental and physical] capacities of blind people and ignoring many effective alternative strategies for discernment that do not rely on sight (May and Ferri 120, 127-29). In this sense, Català's use of visual impairment metaphors to critique ignorance derives power from perpetuating the subordinate position of people with disabilities. The repeated references to blindness (or myopia) over and above other physical impairments have implications for women writers because of the visual methods that are often used to evaluate them. By characterizing members of her public as blind, Català's prologue serves to disaccredit the gaze of those who attempt to examine her gender identity via her body and/or her works. In a more sophisticated version of the children's rhyme "I'm rubber, you're glue," Català proclaims that: "la major part de les voltes la vàlua negativa no radica en son obra sinó en sos definidors" (599) ("the majority of the time, the negative evaluation does not stem from the work, but from its definers"). Català yet again turns the tables on her critics, casting doubt on the effectiveness of their gaze, a strategy that functions throughout the prologue to limit the reach of negative critical assessments.

IV. The Representation of Flawed Reception, Poor Vision, and Ignorant Publics in "L'Embruix"

In this chapter's previous sections, I have argued that Català regulates a critical gaze that infringes upon personal boundaries and makes unqualified judgments through her correspondence and the prologue "Pòrtic." The short story "L'Embruix," published more than two decades after those texts, works to similar effect through its portrayal of a problematic fictional gaze. The *ruralista* form amplifies readers' attention to the ways that provincial and undereducated groups of "espectadors-judicadors" tell stories about deviant women, while the tragic end brings to the fore the social consequences—present and potential—of their behaviors.

"L'Embruix" centers on a voyeuristic young male, Miquelet, who surreptitiously gazes at the inscrutable body of a young widow, Pepa, through her bedroom window. After the untimely death of her husband, Pepa begins a host of peculiar practices, including a nightly undressing in front of her window. Miquelet, newly engaged to another woman with all potential for a bright future in his close-knit rural community, becomes enthralled with the striking—and possibly hysterical—Pepa. His dearth of [sexual] experience with women, together with the townspeople's lack of understanding about how to treat women like Pepa, makes his position particularly vulnerable. Her actions and body captivate Miquelet, who finally succumbs to temptation and takes hold of her on her terrace one night, biting her neck in a symbolic ravishing. The unspeakable shame that results leads him to hang himself in the orchard that once promised a productive and happy life. The story ends as townswomen declare this event the result of "la puixança misteriosa i inaplacable de l'Embruix" (963) ("the mysterious and implacable power of the Curse"). "L'Embruix" thus portrays the lasting effects of socially deviant behavior when evaluated by a naïve and superstitious public.

Pepa is the object of townspeople's gaze. Her behavior incites inspection and commentary, similar to the way that some critical reception of women writers functions to place

their personal lives (and physical appearances) under a magnifying glass. Furthermore, Pepa's body, and what she does with it, signals her problematic femininity. For one, her husband's death has left her unmarried and childless, which means that she fails to fulfill the only appropriate roles available to women in this rural village. Her potential to function as a social deviant is redoubled by the peculiar performances that begin two years after her widowing, which propel neighborhood gossip mills:

> Una comare l'havia vista com, venint de la font amb els càntirs plens, els buidava pressarosament a la porta de casa; una altra contà que, havent-li dut roba perquè tallés una camisa—car la Pepa era molt traçuda—, la hi retornà en el clot de les mans, trinxada a miques, tot dient-li, amb unes grans rialles, que n'havia fet paperets per a Corpus [...] Aviat la follia no fou un secret per ningú, senyals tan vistents en donava la pobra orada. Ara sortia a la finestra i fent la senyal de la creu i escarnint el senyor Rector, es posava a predicar davant del carrer solitari, clamant amb unció: "Germans meus caríssims!..." (947)
>
> (A lady neighbor had seen how she, coming from the well with pitchers full, would hastily dump them at the door of the house; another told how, having brought her fabric so that she could cut out a shirt—since Pepa was quite skillful—she returned it to her in the palm of her hands, shredded in pieces, telling her, with a loud laugh, that she had made confetti for Corpus Christi […] Soon her madness was not a secret for anyone, so visible were the signs that the poor lunatic gave. Now she'd walk up to the window and making the sign of the cross and mimicking the Rector, she began to preach to the empty street, exclaiming devotedly: 'My dearest brothers!...')

The framing of this description underscores its rumorous nature: Miquelet is recalling stories he had heard his mother share at the dinner table. The villagers' observations reveal their central preoccupation: Pepa's noncompliance with gender roles. Concretely, she mishandles her (stereotypically female) duties to provide water to the home and to mend a shirt, and performs instead the role of a man by imitating the rector. Part way through this recollection, the perspective shifts from the neighbors' observations to Miquelet's. A fleeting interpretive phrase marks this change: "Aviat la follia no fou un secret per ningú, senyals tan vistents en donava la pobra orada" (947) ("Soon her madness was not a secret for anyone, so visible were the signs that the poor lunatic gave"). Hearsay about Pepa's actions turns into conclusions about her mental state and then another observation confirms these assumptions. Nothing interrupts this self-perpetuating cycle of rumors. Indeed, the only words uttered by Pepa in all of "L'Embruix" are "'Germans meus caríssims!'" ("'My dearest brothers!'"). The absence of her voice signifies her distance from the stories told about her. Pepa's role remains secondary to that of the speaking actors around her. In this way, the text centers on those that look at and evaluate the deviant female. It is the story of the madwoman [stripping] in the attic [window]—and her reception, as it were.

Pepa's absent voice is consequential because other villagers' reconstructions are shaped by their lack of access to verifiable information and nothing can improve these stories. A group of men, including doctors, struggle to understand, define, and/or regulate Pepa's condition, which signals their intellectual shortcomings. The first indication of impotence comes from the name of Pepa's father, Xai—meaning lamb—, which suggests his innocence or an associated ignorance. When Xai consults doctors about her condition, they each provide distinct, and thus seemingly subjective, explanations. The first medic suggests a diagnosis of "histerisme de mala

llei" (948) ("a bad case of hysteria"). At the time of this short story's publication (1930), the diagnosis of hysteria has already spent two decades out of favor with the medical establishment, never again to return as a legitimate diagnosis.[80] As a consequence, the doctor's alleged expertise comes under question. The doctor even appears skeptical of his own remedy, using the qualifier "maybe" to propose a cure: "Potser, si tornés a casar-se…" (948) ("Maybe if she got married again…"). A second doctor proposes a hereditary cause (Pepa's mother's alcoholism). Reminiscent of nineteenth-century Naturalist perspectives, this explanation is also passé and offers no cure. The final physician's argument sounds the most scientific. He affirms "la seva filla tenia una mena de granets en el tel del cervell i que aquest gam, quan s'arreplega, queda per la vida..." (948) ("your daughter has some sort of bumps on the membrane around her brain and this disease, once caught, stays for life…"). As in Miquelet's previous recollection of the neighborhood gossip, Pepa's voice is never heard. This narrative strategy emphasizes the creation of a story around Pepa's behavior; all of these men also point to her body as a source for madness, the cause of which is never definitively revealed or "fixed." It seems that Pepa's body may not be the cause of her condition. As Jennifer Smith suggests of the ostensibly hysterical female protagonist of Emilia Pardo Bazán's short story "Error de diagnóstico" (1907), Pepa does not embody her deviance but rather the prejudices of the doctors diagnosing her (93). The implication is that the male gaze (in this case, a medical one) cannot decipher and therefore cannot regulate pathological—or perhaps simply deviant—women; rather, it creates them.

When the diagnostic abilities of the doctors are found lacking, Xai consults the women of the town, whose conclusions reveal their superstitious beliefs. One neighbor claims to know

[80] Mark S. Micale states that statements from physicians regarding the declining diagnosis of this "disorder" can be found as early as 1904 and by 1914, the diagnosis is almost entirely abandoned (501, 514).

what has triggered Pepa's condition: the eponymous *embruix*. The narrator reports that she claims "que *allò* era embruix i que la Pepa guariria quan volgués la veïna de la banda esquerra" (948, emphasis in original) ("that *that* was a curse and that Pepa would be cured when the lady next-door wanted"). This declaration signifies the neighbor's belief in the supernatural and situates the story in an identifiably Catalan context by incorporating an important subject of local folklore (and one that expresses clear gendered anxieties about female agency): witchcraft. A suggestively illustrated article (Illustration 3) by "Matías Bonafé"[81] in an 1898 edition of the popular satirical weekly *L'Esquella de la torratxa* illuminates how an ongoing belief in witches leads to all manner of events being attributed to their power:

> En altres pobles, entre altras rasses, la bruixa ha desaparescut: aquí no. […] ¿Qui l'ha ocasionada la ruína d'aquesta casa? La bruixa ¿A qui's deu la perdua d'aquesta família? A la bruixa. ¿Qui l'ha enviat al cementiri á aquest que ahir estava bo? La bruixa. ¿Qui li ha inspirat á aquella noya la violentíssima passió que sent? La bruixa […] Aquí la tenim i la tindrem sempre…A no ser que s'inventin una novas màquines esquiladores, que treguin la llana dels clatells mes depressa que las d'ara. (781)
>
> (In other nations, in other races, the witch has disappeared: not here. […] Who has caused the ruin of this house? The witch. What is responsible for this family's loss? The witch. Who has sent to the cemetery this one who was well yesterday? The witch. Who has inspired in this girl the violent passion that she feels? The witch […] Here we have her and we always will…Unless some new shearing machines are invented that clear the wool from their eyes more quickly than the ones we have now.)

[81] Matías Bonafé is a pseudonym of Juli Francesc Guibernau.

Bonafé proposes that the superstitions of the Catalan people have outlasted those of other nations, which causes them to attribute the random or the inexplicable to the work of witches. In the turn-of-the-century Catalan context, then, a belief in witchcraft symbolizes naïveté—also framed here as a lack of seeing clearly—that must be confronted in order for the nation to advance. Consequently, the motif of *l'embruix* (the curse) in the story points to the enduring ignorance of the townspeople, which includes the women who suggest the power of witchcraft and the men who give them credence.

Miquelet's lack of experience and education creates a significant roadblock to devising an alternate explanation of Pepa's behavior. An inner monologue reveals that his attempt at analysis leads only to faulty conclusions:

> Existien de veritat persones armades d'un tal poder recòndit que, amb una mirada de gairell, amb unes paraules incomprensibles per als profans, amb un gest estrambòtic, fins amb la sola projecció de la volentat follona, poguessin vessar el malefici damunt llurs semblants desprevinguts i portar-los guariment en ple gam o malaltia sobtada enmig de la salut…? […] [L]es hauria tingut per falòrnies de comares, per fruits noïbles de la ignorància, si els diaris no haguessin parlat moltes vegades d'històries estranyes d'hipnotisme i telepatia. (948-49)
>
> (Did there really exist persons armed with hidden powers who, with a sideways glance, with words unintelligible to laymen, with a peculiar gesture, even with just the force of their crazed wills, could cast a spell over their unsuspecting fellow man and bring them healing at the height of illness or sudden sickness in health…? […] He would've taken this as an old wives' tale if newspapers hadn't spoken many times of strange stories of hypnotism and telepathy.)

As the only reader in his family, Miquelet is the best equipped to learn from outside sources. Yet, the publication of sensationalist news in periodicals—a supposed source of reliable reporting—impedes his ability to parse fact from fiction. His self-inquiry thus functions as a critique of poor newspaper reporting (or, perhaps, early twentieth-century fake news). It draws attention to the difficulty for Catalunya—especially its gullible populace—to evolve if one of the few accessible sources of information reinforces their immature beliefs. In keeping with the patronizing tone that Català strikes in "Pòrtic," the narrator appears in order to clarify that Miquelet is not even capable of devising coherent questioning to make sense of his own doubts: "Clar està que aquestes cabòries no passaven pel magí d'En Miquelet amb l'ordre i claredat amb què acabem de referir-les" (949) ("Clearly, these concerns did not pass through Miquelet's imagination with the order and clarity with which we have just referred to them"). In other words, Miquelet is like the public Català describes in "Pòrtic" in that both lack the necessary expertise to evaluate the stories they hear. While in "Pòrtic" Català uses this trait in order to indicate that this public should not be granted cultural authority, in "L'Embruix" it foreshadows the potential ramifications of unreliable storytelling.

As if to underscore the nescience of the public, the least-scientific explanation of Pepa's behavior (It's witchcraft!) triggers a chain reaction leading to perdition. Because of the neighbors' spell theory, Xai decides not to institutionalize his daughter in the Sant Boi asylum.[82] As a result, Pepa is positioned to become the object of Miquelet's late-night voyeurism. Miquelet attempts to satisfy his curiosity about Pepa by spying on her, but the repeated comparisons of her body with those of other enigmatic women signifies her enduring incomprehensibility. At

[82] This asylum, founded in 1854, is one of the first of its kind and becomes a prominent, and recognizably Catalan, institution, which reaffirms the geo-cultural context of the narrative. See: (Navarro Hurtado; Siguan).

varying points in the story, Pepa is said to resemble the exemplary and virginal Mother Mary (947), the sometimes-sensual Mary Magdalene (953), a superhuman goddess (956), and finally, the idealized feminine figure of Canova's Venus (960). These diverse allusions affirm both her visual appeal and her inscrutability. Popular images of Mary Magdalene, for instance, alternately portray her as a seductress and as a penitent (Kruppa 122); the story of her body evades facile classification. Similarly, Canova's Venus also represents something unknowable, or, as Hugh Honour asserts, "an image of the remote and unattainable" (670).[83] Like these women, Pepa proves intriguing for her beauty, yet she remains only partially comprehensible. The narrator claims that "aquell cos de devesa [...] anà lliurant d'un a un tots sos secrets mirífics als ulls golafres del minyó" (956) ("that goddess body […] gave up all of its marvelous secrets to the young man's gluttonous eyes"). This assertion, however, proves unreliable given that Pepa's window frame obstructs Miquelet's full view of her body,[84] her partial visibility symbolizing that she exists outside the full intellectual and physical grasp of Miquelet (that is, until he decides to physically invade her space and attack her).

"L'Embruix" ultimately dramatizes the effects of inadequate collective knowledge. Just as Català asserts in "Pòrtic" that "no és encara la col·lectivitat seriosament adestrada per a judicar" (602) ("the masses are still not sufficiently trained to judge"), the rural community in "L'Embruix" also fails to assess or treat Pepa adequately. In "Pòrtic," poor judgment has the power to stifle (or kill) a nascent national literature, while in this short story it leads to the

[83] Canova sculpted a series of Venus statues, and thus it is impossible to know to which one the narrator refers. However, each of them represented beauty, feminine perfection, and eroticism, to greater and lesser degrees (Honour 670).

[84] The narrator explains that "les extremitats quedaven i quedarien sempre amagades per la paretella de l'esqueixada" ("her extremities remained and would always remain hidden by the wall of the windowsill") (956).

untimely and tragic demise of a young man and the social othering and violation of an innocent young woman. The last line of "L'Embruix" attests to the potential for the continued spread of an inexplicable and uncontrollable contagion—"la puixança misteriosa i inaplacable de l'Embruix" (963) ("the mysterious and implacable power of the Curse"). If *l'embruix* is read as a metaphor for ignorance, as it is in Bonafé's text, then the story's conclusion points to its staying power and the threat it continues to pose to society. The curse exists because it continues to derive power from superstitious beliefs, which is to say that society is doomed until it can remedy its ignorance.

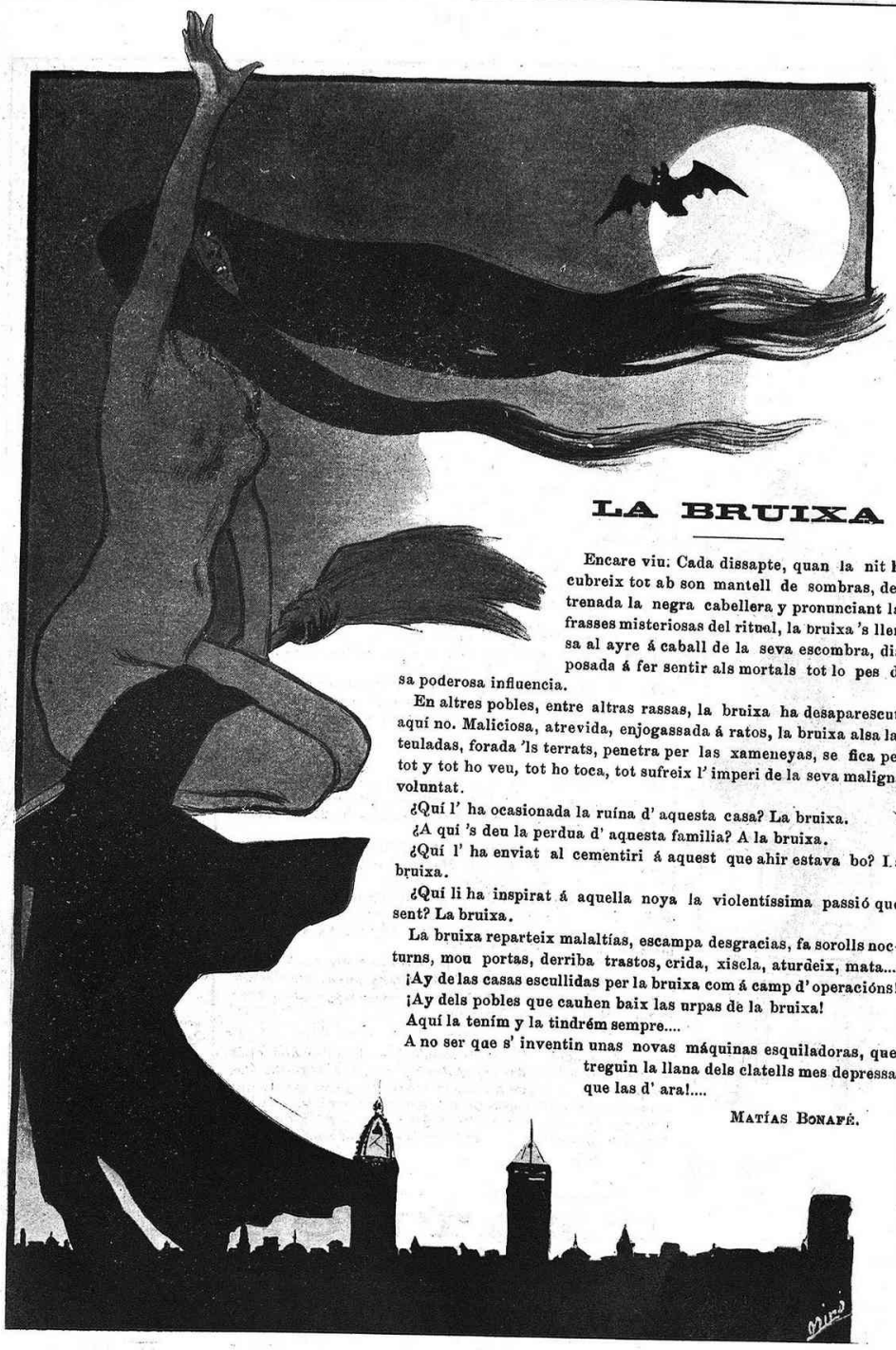
In terms of literary reception, the visual references in the story ultimately attest to a gaze-obsessed society that seeks—in vain—to know (especially women) by seeing. Sight becomes, as in "Pòrtic," a privileged metaphor for knowledge At the beginning, Miquelet's father proclaims that he hopes his son can live "sense orbeses limitadors" (944) ("without limiting blind spots"), or rather, without ignorance or at least with more of an education than he enjoyed. In the context of Miquelet's obsessive and ultimately self-destructive voyeurism, this statement proves ironic—a little blindness may have helped save him. The window frame that initially obscures Pepa's body and symbolizes both her centrality and her inaccessibility serves to keep Miquelet's desires in check. When Miquelet finally sees Pepa's whole body "lliure d'artifici i de vels encobridors" (956) ("free from artifice and concealing veils"), he is unequipped to handle the sensations that this sight provokes because of his inexperience with/lack of knowledge of women. As a result, he falls prey to his basest instincts. In trying to apprehend Pepa, Miquelet brings about a symbolic loss of Eden that ends in suicide in his orchard. He embodies fears about the power of deviant women. At the same time, the story seems to make clear that his downfall is also caused by the invasive and ignorant gazes of others, as well as his own inability to control his gaze. This

story again reorients the arrow of causality: the blame lies more with the defective techniques of observation and analysis than the behavior of the observed. For her part, although Pepa becomes the subject of penetrating gazes, they are ultimately an ineffective method of surveillance and regulation. In this way, "L'Embruix" works alongside "Pòrtic" to reaffirm that the seeable is not necessarily controllable or comprehensible. They function as a symbolic reassertion of privacy in an atmosphere of close examination.

For women authors of Català's time, such as Emilia Pardo Bazán, it has been suggested that what cannot be said in letters—let alone in public—can be said in stories, the fictional form disguising the more daring critical commentary (Fernández Cubas 51). In this chapter, I have shown how, in Català's case, three distinct textual forms—letters, non-fictional prologues, and this fictional short story—work together to triangulate a revealing ethics of literary reception. Her letters both grant and restrict the rights of her readers to access her person(a) as she asks them to keep their eyes on the text, not the body that wrote it. By portraying the social and cultural ramifications of ignorance in "Pòrtic" and "L'Embruix," she underscores the critic's obligation to be well educated and open-minded. In many ways, her ethics here is a negative one: it explains what not to do in order to avoid artificially or prematurely limiting the contribution of a group of writers—including women—at the turn of the twentieth century. The complement, what good critical reception should do, is the subject of chapter four.

Illustration 2: “1890. Autoretrat” (Català, “Autoretrat” 29)

Illustration 3: "La Bruixa" (Bonafé 781)



LA BRUIXA

Encare viu: Cada dissapte, quan la nit ho cubreix tot ab son mantell de sombras, destrenada la negra cabellera y pronunciant las frasses misteriosas del ritual, la bruixa 's llensa al ayre á caball de la seva escombra, disposada á fer sentir als mortals tot lo pes de sa poderosa influencia.

En altres pobles, entre altras rassas, la bruixa ha desaparescut: aquí no. Maliciosa, atrevida, enjogassada á ratos, la bruixa alsa las teuladas, forada 'ls terrats, penetra per las xameneyas, se fica per tot y tot ho veu, tot ho toca, tot sufreix l' imperi de la seva maligna voluntat.

¿Quí l' ha ocasionada la ruína d' aquesta casa? La bruixa.

¿A quí 's deu la perdua d' aquesta familia? A la bruixa.

¿Quí l' ha enviat al cementiri á aquest que ahir estava bo? La bruixa.

¿Quí li ha inspirat á aquella noya la violentíssima passió que sent? La bruixa.

La bruixa reparteix malaltías, escampa desgracias, fa sorolls nocturns, mou portas, derriba trastos, crida, xiscla, aturdeix, mata....

¡Ay de las casas escullidas per la bruixa com á camp d' operacións!

¡Ay dels pobles que cauhen baix las urpas de la bruixa!

Aquí la tenim y la tindrém sempre....

A no ser que s' inventin unas novas máquinas esquiladoras, que treguin la llana dels clatells mes depressa que las d' ara!....

MATÍAS BONAFÉ.

L' Almanach de la Esquella es un caudal de lectura.

CHAPTER 4: A DEFENSE OF OTHERED LITERATURE AND OTHERS IN LITERATURE IN VÍCTOR CATALÀ'S PROLOGUES AND TWO SHORT STORIES, "CARNESTOLTES" AND "L'ALTRA VIDA"

The previous three chapters have demonstrated several facets of the methods of literary creation and reception that Català's texts put forth. Chapter one explored allegories of creation and reception in *Solitud*, including the representation of fictional narrative as a medium that reflects and transforms reality. Chapter two, which analyzed *Un film (3.000 metres)*, focused primarily on the importance of creative autonomy. Chapter three turned again to depictions of the act of literary reception, arguing that the prologue to *Caires Vius* and the short story "L'embruix" show the limits of myopic and moralistic critical gazes. In this sense, both this short story and the novel *Solitud* represent certain shortcomings that Català saw in her reading public. Català's works, though, do more than simply call out the failings of the patriarchal criticism she received. This chapter explores how Català's oeuvre puts forth an alternative method of observation and appraisal, an ethics of reception based on an understanding and appreciation of difference.

The issue of difference is particularly significant for Català because of the way that her contemporary reception obsessively draws attention to her failure to conform to conservative notions of identity and behavior. The first section of this chapter asserts that Català's critics fashion her alterity based on their perceptions of her gender identity and her choice of dark thematic issues, both of which they view as masculine. Serving as a response to these critical evaluations, Català's prologues outline methods of reception that defends the aesthetic value of her purportedly "different" style of work, an argument that comprises the second section of the

chapter. In the third and final section of the chapter, I propose that two of Català's short stories, "Carnestoltes" ("Carnival") (1907) and "L'altra vida" ("The Other Life") (1930) model the construction of difference through their representation of disability and non-normative gender and sexuality. These stories underscore the protagonists' embodied sense of physical, spatial, and psychological Otherness. The respect for and acceptance of difference that Català defends in her prologues is symbolized in these stories by the development of homosocial relationships, which allays her characters' sense of isolation and marginality. The stories' ultimately tragic conclusions represent the still-limited possibilities for lasting acceptance of those [literary subjects and persons] that deviate from the norm in Català's time.

I. Gender, Genre, and Literary Criticism in Early-Twentieth Century Catalunya

Many critical works on Català (the present included) echo Català's use of a male nom de plume, a choice that complicates, to an extent, Català's recognition as a female author. For this reason, some contemporary scholars use the name Caterina Albert in their publications in order to underscore Català's female identity.[85] Nonetheless, Català's gender identity is never a particularly well-kept secret. Though Català begins to use a masculine pseudonym in works published after the 1898 *Jocs florals*, it is soon discovered that this name masks a female author. In 1903, R.D. Péres insists that the public knows that Català is not a man because of the extensive publicity that she has received. Péres states, "Repetidas veces se ha afirmado ya en la prensa que Víctor Català es un pseudónimo bajo el cual se oculta una mujer" ("Dramas rurals" 293). That Català's female identity, if not always her given name, becomes common knowledge

[85] See, for instance, Kathleen McNerney's new translated volume of Català's short fiction: *Silent Souls and Other Stories* "by Caterina Albert." See also: (Rotella "Naturalism;" Rotella "Women Alone;" Arteaga Iriarte).

underscores that the attribution of "virility" to her texts or persona is a critical choice rather than a case of mistaken identity. Consequently, it is not Català's near career-long use of male pseudonym that risks erasing her contributions as a woman writer, but rather the critical masculinization of her works and her persona. For instance, in Josep Carner's 1904 evaluation of Català's work, Carner clearly refers to Català with the feminine form of the noun "escriptora" ("writer"). Yet Carner's understanding that Català is a female writer does not impede his subsequent gendered analysis of the author, in which he claims, "dita escriptora devé cada dia més mascle" (116) ("the aforementioned female writer becomes more masculine by the day"). Carner's interpretation, and those similar to it, can be traced to Català's choice of dark literary themes. These themes provoke a spectrum of critical responses from her contemporaries that frequently reflect on questions of personal and gender identity. Critical approval of her themes is frequently tied to her purportedly "virile" writing style. Alternatively, critical disapproval and questioning of her work is often related to assumptions about gender and genre, which underscores how creative access to certain literary forms and themes remains fraught for women writers in the early twentieth century. While male Modernists plot tenebrous tales without provoking great inquiry into their personal lives, such stories written by a female author lead to assumptions about and interrogations of her persona.

On more than one occasion, however, critics do recognize Català for her ability to write moving stories about members of society not often recognized for their potential to be literary subjects (of authors either male or female). In his 1931 review of *Contrallums* (*Backlighting*) (1930), Domènec Guansé lauds Català's talent:

> És una prosa que fa pensar en aquests rostres de faccions poc correctes, que, de moment, no us semblen gaire bells, però que de seguida, per la seva vivacitat expressiva, us

> enamoren. Això en fa adonar que, dintre de la seva irregularitat, dintre el caos de la prosa catalana del vuitcents, la prosa de Víctor Català és de les que comencen a tenir específicament un caràcter. ("L'esperit" 9)
>
> (It's a prose that makes one think of those faces with imperfect features, which don't appear very beautiful at first, but all of a sudden, they enamor you with their expressive vigor. That makes you realize that Víctor Català's prose, within its irregularity, within the chaos of nineteenth-century Catalan prose, is one that begins to have a specific character).

In Guansé's review, the formal elements of Català's work initially appear in a negative light. For Guansé, the prose developing outside the bounds of linguistically normalized Catalan generally appears chaotic. In the case of Català, the author's non-standard language use is reflected in the imperfect characters that her works depict. Nonetheless, Guansé affirms that the peculiar literary traits of Català's texts become an acquired taste. As such, unexpected, even ugly, characters and modes of expression emerge as positive and distinguishing attributes of her work, demonstrating how Català's literary project achieves critical success amidst its "otherness."

Later in the review, Guansé appears symbolically stuck between enjoying the unconventional elements of Català's work and needing to support his own dominant position as a male writer and thinker. To this end, he argues that Català should be accepted, not because of her innovative contributions, but rather because she so effectively blends in as a female writer in a male literary world. Guansé asserts, "Però precisament el més revolucionari que pot fer una feminista és això: fer que en l'exercici de la seva professió ens faci oblidar del seu sexe" ("L'esperit" 9) ("But the most revolutionary thing a feminist can do is precisely that: make it so that the exercise of her profession makes us forget about her sex"). Several significant gendered

assumptions underlie Guansé's statement. For one, by using the female article in front of the word *feminista*, his text implies that only women are feminists. This choice marginalizes the feminist movement by suggesting that achieving gender equality is women's work for which men are not responsible. Secondly, Guansé insinuates that "oblidar del seu sexe," or forgetting one's sex, entails forgetting femaleness, not maleness. Because women are the marked "other," it is their difference that must be disremembered. Finally, Guansé alludes to the fact that the group monitoring the performance of these feminists is male. Given that the male custodians of professional literary society primarily admit women who have made their sex invisible, or who have otherwise symbolically cross-dressed as male, what becomes clear is that women cannot enter the world of early twentieth-century cultural production as women. As a consequence, the contributions of female authors are obscured as they become subsumed under the umbrella of a Modernist high culture that is always male gendered (Arkinstall 110).

Guansé's assertion that identity—specifically, female gender identity—is best when ignorable has important implications for the quest for gender equality in the literary realm. In essence, Guansé's text shows support for gender blindness. Akin to the ideology of color blindness, gender blindness implies that the speaking subject evaluates all genders in an undifferentiated way. However, instead of leveling the playing field for the greater participation of non-dominant groups, blindness ideologies, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva demonstrates, reliably reproduce inequalities, only more covertly (3).[86] Krista Ratcliffe argues that the practice of

[86] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's scholarship specifically focuses on color blindness in relation to the perpetuation of racist ideologies. Here, I employ his observations on the effects of color-blindness to describe outcomes of other blindness ideologies with the understanding that discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality or other characteristics may all be experienced quite differently. As mentioned in chapter three, it is important to recognize that it remains problematic to refer to ostensibly anti-discriminatory practices with language that relies on metaphors of physical/mental ability.

gender blindness, in its normalization and naturalization of the powerful, impedes the recognition of privileges associated with maleness while also displacing the real work of rectifying inequalities (134). As seen in Guansé's comment, gender blindness does not actually allow women to participate as women—instead, it allows them to participate only after neutralizing their difference via the critical masculinization of their work and/or persona. The masculinization of female writing shows the capacity of women to perform on par with men at the same time that it reminds women that they have overstepped their bounds, according to Maryellen Bieder ("Gender" 99). At the turn of the twentieth century, reviews by critics such as Guansé illustrate that Català is writing in an environment that offers only minimal attempts to make space for women writers, while also reifying the inherent superiority, normalcy, and predominance of male writing.

One of the few reviews of Català's work written by a female contemporary of the author, Blanca de los Ríos, draws attention to some of the same characteristics noticed by Guansé, especially Català's focus on social outcasts, but ultimately achieves different effects. In a 1905 article on Català's short story collection *Drames Rurals* (1902), de los Ríos describes Català as:

> el poeta de los humildes, el austero cantor de los dolores callados, de los dramas íntimos, de los idilios obscuros; el cantor generoso de las *almas mudas* y solas, de los insignificantes, de los pobres, de los anónimos, de los olvidados, de aquellos á quienes nadie canta. En el alma de *Víctor Català*, hay ternezas para todos esos desheredados; justicia para todos esos defraudados; honor para esos justos que se ignora a sí propios y esplendor de belleza con que vestir de luz eterna á esos prosaicos buenos é insignificantes, con quienes nadie compone un cuadro, ni una estrofa, ni un capítulo de novela. (169 "Víctor Català, por Blanca," emphasis in original)

By bringing to light Català's skill at writing the stories of those neglected or made one-dimensional in other works of literature, both de los Ríos's review and Guansé's (written more than two decades later) show that portraits of the social pariah form a significant and recurring motif in Català's writing. As this chapter argues, this motif promotes the recognition and valorization of difference.

De los Ríos's assessment, however, differs from Guansé's by claiming Català's work as women's writing and critiquing the gendered reception of women authors. In part, de los Ríos's review functions as an excessively sentimentalizing response to those who might otherwise perform a facile grouping of Català with other presumably soulless and deterministic Naturalists. De los Ríos resituates Català's work in the realm of feminine writing by arguing that her stories, rather than aimlessly indulging in portrayals of certain base instincts, promote a sympathetic emotional response through their depiction of those othered by society. In regards to the attribution of maleness to Català's writing, de los Ríos's perspective diverges from Guansé; for her, being said to write like a man remains a backhanded compliment: "Todo el mundo sabe que el mayor encomio que se hace de una producción femenina—aunque á veces sea la mayor censura—es decir: 'parece de un hombre'" ("Víctor Català, por Blanca" 168). *Censura* connotes criticism, in the sense of disapproval, and also suppression, which is to say that finisecular critics make less visible the contributions of women writers when they claim the innovations of women-authored texts for the aggrandizement of the category of male writing. By calling attention to the assumption that good women writers simply imitate men, de los Ríos's review serves to show how early twentieth-century critics perpetuate rather than amend inequalities by enacting a practice of gender blindness that fails to recognize the capacity of women writers as women. In

sum, under the gaze of Guansé and de los Ríos, Català's work receives generally sympathetic assessments that also demonstrate the gendered dynamics of critical reading.

Because of Català's use of dark themes, critics call into question not only her gender identity, but also her personality. Late in her literary career, Català is interviewed by Baltasar Porcel. In this interview, first cited in chapter three, Porcel inquires if her oft-shadowy stories reflect some equally dark character: "És una persona pessimista, vostè? [...] No ho sé, però penso que la visió de la humanitat que vostè té és negativa, depriment, i per ventura vostè és escèptica?" (68) ("Are you a pessimistic person, ma'am? I don't know, but I think the vision of humanity that you hold is negative, depressing, and so maybe you are a skeptic?"). Porcel attempts to relate the topics of Català's stories to a pessimistic worldview that he assumes she must hold. His questioning reflects the types of suspicious criticism addressed in the introduction and chapter one, which particularly affects women authors by drawing attention away from their work and onto their personal identities, lives, and bodies instead.

In contrast to criticism received by Català, which repeatedly associates her work to her body and her persona, critics more frequently consider contemporary male-authored works to be significant artistic creations, and less commonly expressions of the author's personal angst. Català's male contemporaries, such as Raimon Casellas's *Els Sots Feréstecs* (*Dark Vales*) (1901) and Prudenci Bertrana's *Josafat* (*Josafat*) (1906), write similarly crude—and polemical—portraits of the rural world. All three authors provoke some negative critical reactions.[87] Jordi Cornellà-Detrell even observes that, to some extent, the controversies stirred up by the works of

[87] For instance, Català's *Drames Rurals* are the topic of an unenthusiastic review, titled "Un libro fuerte e incompleto," by Joan Maragall (197). Given that Català does not reveal her female identity to Maragall until after this review is written, it can be assumed that her gender is not the cause of his distaste for this work (See: "A Joan Maragall, 2" 1787). On the polemic caused by Prudenci Bertrana's *Josafat*, see also: (Granell i Nogué).

Modernist authors—including Casellas, Bertrana, and Català—help propel them to fame ("Una novel·la" 88-89). Regardless of the attention that their dark and controversial themes may have garnered, critical treatment of Català's work differs from that of her male counterparts. For instance, Guansé's review of Casella's novel only briefly remarks that *Els Sots Feréstecs* expresses the author's individual viewpoint, suggesting that Casellas "devia tenir un concepte tristíssim de la vida" (*Revista de Catalunya* 310) ("must have a very sad view of life"). Guansé avoids proffering any gendered implications of such a worldview, which is not the case in his aforementioned review of Català's collection *Contrallums*.

Other reviewers entirely divorce the lives of male authors from their literary works, which privileges the male artistic perspective as unspoiled via its disembodiment. On the occasion of the translation of Casellas's novel in 1908, one reviewer lauds the work as a prime example of ruralism, as a novel of national importance, and as a symbol of the civility of Catalans (López Picó 2). Notably absent is any questioning of the relationship of the author's personal experiences to the novel's gritty plot, which centers on a chaplain confronting the atavistic impulses of a rural town and the devastating influence of an unsavory local prostitute. Similar to Casellas, Bertrana escapes personality- or body-centered critique for his novel, which also features crime and prostitution. Indeed, one of Bertrana's critics, Diego Ruiz, explains that the author is merely a conduit for his art:

> No hay escritor y asunto en Bertrana; hay obra, hay síntesis invariable é inconfundible. Hombres así escriben por lo mismo que el torrente arrastra y la tramontana arranca rieles; van como en pos de sí mismos; son llevados, son artistas. *Josafat* es un producto de la Naturaleza. La misma Naturaleza que da las emociones, las escribe en algunos casos. (12)

Instead of Bertrana's personality or body being read as a possible source of his subject matter, the critic describes an extra-corporeal source of inspiration: nature. By suggesting that Bertrana's writing transcends his physicality, Ruiz's review detaches any evaluation of Bertrana's work from an assessment of his persona. As I have previously shown, Català's critics do not often grant her the same treatment; the female body/persona becomes imbricated with the message of the female-authored work. The difference between such reviews can be attributed to the fact that cruel, intense, and/or morbid themes are associated with "masculine" or "virile" writing.[88] As such, to view the tenebrous or scandalous tales of male modernist writers as a reflection of their psychic state or physical condition serves to reinforce—rather than counter—their normative gender identities. However, Català's remains one of the few women, and even fewer Catalan women, producing works in this dark and ostensibly masculine style. As such, the discovery of her gender identity often becomes something to explain away, to defend, or to question because it does not square with essentialist notions of female-gendered behavior.

II. Català's Response to Critics in Correspondence and Prologues

In light of reviews that highlight undesirable or masculinizing elements in her writing, Català assumes, in correspondence and prologues, a defensive position in order to justify her work. For instance, Català privately responds to Maragall in a rhetorically charged letter, written three days after the publication of his review. She affirms that writers should accept others' judgments "sense protestar-ne mai" ("without ever protesting"), but then proceeds to argue that what most pains her is the label of "immoral o corruptor" ("immoral or corrupting") that he has

[88] In his 1905 review of Català's work, Ángel Guerra affirms that "sensibilidad, poesía, ternura, ensueño" are traits of women's writing, while cruelty, pain, and intensity are characteristic of male work (3).

applied to her writing ("A Joan Maragall, 1" 1784-85). That this label, which stems from the thematic aspect of her stories, is the one that she claims grieves her most serves to indicate the central importance of thematic choices in Català's oeuvre. The prologue to Català's next short story collection, *Ombrívoles* (*Somber Shades*), functions as a second response to Maragall's criticism by arguing that the depiction of marginalized subjects has aesthetic value. This prologue, entitled "Als llegidors" ("To the Readers"), draws attention to the rift between the modernist impulse to focus on what Rita Felski calls "duplicities, deceptions, and destructive desires" (*Uses* 48) and the contemporaneous, and much more idealized, nation-building project of early-twentieth century Catalan literature. Català defends her work by arguing that her creative production reflects personal choices made by her and for her, which affirms her artistic autonomy. She insists that beauty of her writing stems from its authenticity, stating: "la voluptat del dolor és tan real i tan corprenedora com la voluptat del gaudir" ("Als llegidors" 559) ("the voluptuousness of pain is as real and as captivating as the voluptuousness of pleasure"). To find value in both beauty and pain is to find value in a range of artistic subjects. As such, Català's depiction of "undesirable" sentiments in her works reflects her valorization of difficult themes and outcast characters, despite critical opinions to the contrary.

The strength of Català's appeal in this prologue is reinforced by the serious tone that she employs. In the prologue to *Drames Rurals* written two years prior, Català had sarcastically urged the *damisel·la ciutadana* to avert her eyes from its dark stories, lest she grow faint, a strategy reflecting the widespread trope regarding the susceptible and delicate nature of women readers (Simón Palmer 57). In contrast, in "Als llegidors," Català employs a more candid (and

almost apologetic) tone to express her motives.[89] The prologue functions as a detailed and directive explanation of how to approach works viewed as disagreeable. She explains:

> Quelcom encara demana en mi parlar de tristors ombrívoles: no em demana pas dir-vos-les a vosaltres, sinó redir-me-les a mi mateix; si no us plau escoltar-les, deixeu-me sol amb elles, i així tots haurem fet el nostre gust. I d'aquesta manera, lliures de mutuals contrarietats, sabrem respectar-nos i estimar-nos els uns als altres. ("Als llegidors" 559)
>
> (Something still asks me to speak of shadowy sadnesses; it does not ask me to explain them to you, but rather to retell them to myself. If you do not like listening to them, leave me alone with them, and then we will have all satisfied ourselves. And, in this way, free of mutual dissatisfaction, we will know how to respect and love each other).

Català specifies her motives by affirming that she writes to fulfill her own psychic needs rather than to support those of her audience, a statement that serves to situate her work as personal (and thus more appropriate for women to pursue) rather than public. This individualization also reaffirms her quest for creative independence. When public approval remains out of reach, she proposes that one can at least be granted solitude (a theme familiar to readers of *Solitud*) and, importantly, respect. It seems somewhat contradictory that Català spends so much time defending her work, her privacy, and her freedom, when she could have ensured all three by simply not publishing her work. However, without public advocacy, acceptance of her work, and that of her female contemporaries, would be even slower to arrive. Her work serves to teach what seems to be a reluctant audience how to deal with difference: acknowledge it with respect, and, when needed, some distance.

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[89] Francesca Bartrina points out that Català's later prologues are more modest than her earlier ones (*Voluptuositat* 123). As such, the performative display of humility in Català's prologues exists in inverse relationship to time and her notoriety—the more renowned she becomes, the more she insists on her ordinariness.

Although Català suggests that her readers put down her work, her prologues also evidence a paradoxical request. Throughout her career, she asks readers to engage progressively more with her writing, despite any of their initial reservations. As previously mentioned, in the prologue to *Drames rurals*, Català recommends that the reader look away at once. Two years later, in *Ombrívoles*, she asks the reader to at least look, but to leave if they do not like what they find. Finally, in the prologue of *Contrallums*, Català asks the reader to maintain attention on the text until s/he can arrive at her or his own decision, rather than trusting the impulses of others. Given that the prologue of *Contrallums* marks the last time that Català will use opening remarks in a collection to directly address her readers' interpretive method, it serves as the final word to the ethics of reception expressed in her prologues. Català's prologues, thus, ask readers to confront their prejudices about her work and through her work.

Català's description of an ideal reader in the prologue of *Contrallums* points to an increasingly personalized method of interpretation to supplant undue reliance on others' perspectives. Català states:

> [E]n comptes de bescanviar amb el bon amic que passa el platxeri d'una conversa tirada i sens recels, [l'observador imparcial] prefereix concentrar la seva atenció, prefereix callar i rumiar, amb obstinada paciència, el pro i el contra del que observa, i abans de dir, amb tossuderia irreflexiva: "D'aquesta aigua no beuré," o de beure imprudentment de la que li ofereixen, sens analitzar si és prou pura i saludable per a la seva fet, fer-la servir per a trempar-hi una i altra volta les pròpies conviccions […] ("Traient la balda" 814).
>
> ([I]nstead of exchanging the pleasure of a long and trusting conversation with the good friend passing by, [the impartial observer] prefers to concentrate his attention, prefers to be quiet and ruminate the pros and cons of what he observes with obstinate patience. And

> before saying, with unthinking stubbornness: "I will not drink from this water" or drinking imprudently from that which he is offered, without analyzing if it sufficiently pure and healthy for his needs, [he uses] it to temper time and time again his own convictions […])

Català employs water in a stream as a metaphor for literature; to make use of the water is to consume a text. By asking each reader to consider his or her desire for water before mindlessly taking it, Català suggests that the individual determine the value of a given text. Just as Català describes her artistic production in the prologue to *Ombrívoles* as responsive to her own needs, here she recommends that readers approach texts in the same way, taking from them what they need, while also using them to moderate extreme opinions. Situating the work of interpretation with the individual rather than a cultural "influencer," such as the aforementioned Maragall, has several important consequences. For one, it serves to promote reflective engagement with her texts, while also countering the potentially wide reach of negative reviews. It also encourages female readers to develop independence in thought without relying on male literary/cultural "guides." In sum, by defending the interpretive agency of the individual and the development of his or her diverse perspectives, Català's prologue counters the hegemony of a gendered critical apparatus.

In her prologues Català asks readers to arrive at their own conclusions and to recognize and value themes, characters, and even emotions deemed too different to be desirable. As such, these prologues support an ongoing pursuit of creative autonomy (as discussed in greater detail in chapter two) and also a quest for the acceptance of difference. This ethics of reception has implications for the ways in which Català as an unmarried female writer—a social deviant if not outcast—might also find social and critical acceptance. At a time when high praise for women

writers meant blending in and becoming imperceptibly female or conforming their creative work to genres and themes considered appropriate for women, Català fashions through these prologues a liberating artistic identity that allows her to function in the patriarchal creative world around her (Bartrina, *Voluptuositat* 127).[90]

III. Modeling Respect for Differences in "Carnestoltes" and "L'altra vida"

Two of Català's short stories, "Carnestoltes" (1907) and "L'altra vida" (1930), work in unison with the methods of reception put forth in the aforementioned prologues by symbolically modeling acknowledgment of and respect for differences. These stories underscore the emotional, social, and/or physical isolation of their protagonists through depictions of difference, including physical and mental disability,[91] and non-normative gender identity and sexual preference. "Carnestoltes" and "L'altra vida" also reference the advanced age and privileged social class of their protagonists, which distances them from the average Joe / *Joan*. In this way, the stories depict plural and intersecting characteristics that create a multifaceted sense of alterity. This section centers on the representation of physical condition, gender, and sexuality as the protagonists' most consequential distinguishing factors. These characters achieve a reprieve from their sense of marginalization through the exploration of homosocial desire, which counters their solitude and shows a path towards recognition of the Other. Nonetheless, the experience of

[90] On genres and themes considered appropriate for women writers, such as domestic and sentimental writing, see: (Sánchez-Llama 190, 193-95).

[91] Margaret Price provides a useful justification of use of the term "mental disability" (305). She also discusses the inclusion of mental disability within the spectrum of disabilities studies, with the caveat that activists whose work relates to mental disability hold diverse viewpoints regarding "whether or not to self-identify as *disabled*" (302, emphasis in original).

acceptance of the socially deviant, or simply different, is only temporary. Both for these characters and for female writers in Català's time, full integration remains hindered.

In these short stories the signs of otherness—including physical and mental ability, sexuality, and gender identity—are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Past scholarship has called attention to themes of same-sex love and entrapment in "Carnestoltes" and the struggle between interior and exterior worlds in "L'altra vida."[92] However, the representations of the protagonists' physical disability (in the case of "Carnestoltes") and mental disability (in the case of "L'altra vida") have been little examined. Because these conditions play a central role in the protagonists' narrativized existence, it is essential for the analysis of these stories to take into account this aspect of their realities.

Scholarship in the area of disability and gender studies has drawn attention to the multifaceted and intersectional nature of various discourses on marginalization and thus provides a useful point of departure for this chapter's discussion of "Carnestoltes" and "L'altra vida." Bram Dijkstra cites that in the latter half of the nineteenth century, [middle and upper class] women sought to embody frailty to the point of invalidism in order to signal their moral and physical purity (26). On the other hand, good health and vigor—traits that would allow for women's meaningful participation in society—are imagined to signal an unnatural state (Dijkstra 26-27). Yet, while culturally provoked (or enforced) invalidism for these women indicates compliance with gendered social norms, disability as depicted in narrative can take on a different meaning. These representations of disability, as David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder attest, often exist as "a metaphor and a fleshly example of the body's unruly resistance to the cultural

[92] On "Carnestoltes," see: (Alvarado 36; Bartrina, "Felip Palma" 141; Torras 142; Martí Olivella 125; Castellanos "Antologia de contes" 24-25). On "L'altra vida," see: (Bartrina, *Voluptuositat* 154).

desire to 'enforce normalcy'" (48). In other words, when the literary subject deviates from what is considered normative, his/her deviance becomes physically embodied in disability—the inverse of what Dijkstra expresses. Along these lines, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, early-twentieth century women writers are similarly characterized as both morally and physically transgressive. In all cases, though, the body exists as a fraught sign. According to Robert McRuer, those who identify with non-normative sexual identities have also been subject to symbolically charged representations (11). McRuer argues that in certain depictions, homosexuality is associated with physical difference or disability, while "health and ability [emerge as] naturally linked to heterosexuality" (11). The two short stories by Català analyzed here interweave disability, gender identity, and non-heteronormative sexuality as a multivalent metaphor of physical and social otherness.

When represented primarily as a metaphor of difference, the attribution of disability to characters has drawbacks. For one, the use of disability-as-metaphor can serve to emphasize the "normalcy" or "humanity" of characters without disabilities, and consequently dehumanize their counterparts with disabilities (Tova Linett 124). Maren Tova Linett asserts that the use of metaphor can also complicate the reader's ability to engage with the point of view of the character with disabilities and to "think 'through [their] eyes'" (123). Nonetheless, Tova Linett also affirms that not all symbolic uses of characters with disabilities are necessarily deficient, especially when one takes into account the content and purpose of the fictionalized character with disabilities (124). For instance, the representation of characters with disabilities may point to realities shared between able-bodied and non-able bodied persons, and thus humanize all types (Tova Linett 124). In "Carnestoltes" and "L'altra vida," disability serves metaphoric ends and in the process reinforces some stereotyped tropes of difference. However, the representation of

disability in these stories also points to a lived experience with real social, emotional, and physical effects. Català's use of disability-as-difference thus reflects the status quo of an able-body dominant and heteronormative society that is defined on masculinist terms. At the same time, she begins to pave the way for the recognition of marginalized voices and people (and those that write of them).

"Carnestoltes" centers on an elderly Marchioness whose condition as a person with paraplegia serves to underscore her physical, spiritual, and psychological imprisonment. Although the Marchioness's situation has left her embittered and stony, a lifelong servant, Glòria, offers sensitive and unconditional care for her that gradually softens her heart. In one of the earliest representations of female homosocial desire in Catalan (or Spanish) literature, the marchioness awakens to the possibility of mutual affection between Glòria and herself.[93] The third-person narrator breaks the metaphorical fourth wall to self-consciously defend this expression of intimacy by drawing attention away from its non-heteronormative nature: "No era l'objecte de l'amor lo més punyidor i interessant d'aquell miracle, sinó l'amor mateix" (703) ("The object of love was not the most glaring and significant thing about that miracle, but rather the love itself"). Unfortunately, as the Marchioness experiences this psychological revitalization, Glòria's condition takes a turn for the worse. According to the narrator, Glòria's poor health is a psychosomatic result of many years of caring for a persnickety woman; however, it also serves as a manifestation of the prohibited and impossible nature of this relationship. When Glòria finally collapses, the Marchioness's physical disability impedes her from offering help or a parting kiss, underscoring the limitations, both embodied and symbolic, wrought by her condition. The story ends as the Marchioness loses her religious faith as a result of this tragedy.

[93] On the history of representations of female homosocial desire and lesbianism in Spanish and Catalan literature, see: (Simonis Sanpedro) and (Cabré).

"Carnestoltes" first presents the Marchioness's paralysis as an issue of social and physical isolation, which results from her upper-class background, her marital status, and her physical condition.[94] In the opening lines of the story, the reader is drawn into the Marchioness's location: she sits alone in her home in a chair near a window overlooking *Carnestoltes,* the pre-Lenten carnival festivities, outside. The third-person narrator explains: "La Marquesa d'Artigues s'estava en son lloc de costum, en son etern lloc, darrera els vidres del balcó, aclofada en la butaca, amb la tauleta al davant, els impertinents als dits i la pelegrina d'astracan sobren les espatlles seques i ossoses […]" (697) ("The Marchioness of Artigues was in her usual spot, in her eternal spot, behind the balcony's windows, sunken into the armchair, with the table in front, the lambskin pelerine over her dry and bony shoulders […]"). The narrator's description draws attention to the Marchioness's f/rigidity, which dehumanizes her. Between her dried-out body and her fur covering, she is portrayed more like a taxidermic animal in a shop window than a living, breathing woman. The juxtaposition of her solitary positioning in "la gran cambra sense llum" (697) ("the great unlit room") with the celebratory crowds outside her window reinforces her separation and otherness. The narrator then reveals the condition that has led to her interminable seated position: her paralysis. This sequence serves to show that Marchioness's disability emerges as the symbolic embodiment of her otherness. In that the Marchioness lacks something—namely, full mobility—the rest of the story functions as a narrative prosthesis. According to Mitchell and Snyder, a narrative prosthesis "rehabilitates or compensates for its 'lesser' subject by demonstrating that the outward flaw 'attracts' the storyteller's—and by extension—the reader's—interest" (54). Thus, the prosthetic function of the Marchioness's

[94] Upper-class women, such as the Marchioness, are sentenced to a life of meaningless "ocio," which more than one of Català's fictional texts critique. For instance, in *Un film (3.000)*, the narrator satirically presents Pepita's bourgeois activities (242-247).

disability at the beginning of the story redoubles her inhumanity and marginality by "using" her life and condition as a narrative curiosity show.

Later, however, the Marchioness's disability comes into greater focus as a condition constructed by both tangible, physical factors and intangible socio-cultural ones, which reinforces that her disability is both a lived experience and a metaphor for social restrictions. In some instances, the Marchioness's condition creates a lack of physical agency by limiting her movement. After describing the still life of the Marchioness in the window, the narrator reveals that she remains there "per sa immobilitat forçada de paralítica" (697) ("due to the forced immobility of her paralysis"). In other instances, the Marchioness's physical disability serves as representation of her sense of psychological impotency. The narrator emphasizes that, as a result of bodily limitations, even her emotions escape her control: the Marchioness sits with her "cos feixuc" (698) ("weighty body") and "cames mortes" (698) ("dead legs"), awaiting "la nova crisi de tristor o avorriment" (698) ("the new crisis of sadness or boredom"). Rosemarie Garland Thomson argues that the disabled body, as a physical manifestation of difference and lack, comes to serve as a storehouse for broad social anxieties including "vulnerability, control, and identity" (6). This lens brings into focus the Marchioness's self-conscious reflection on her corporeal and social alterity, as she proclaims: "Tothom se'n riu ja de mi…" (699) ("No one takes me seriously now…"). The Marchioness's paralysis clearly signifies physical incapacity as well as her sense of social and emotional marginalization.

Aside from indicating her feelings of otherness, the Marchioness's disability also emerges as a symbolic function of her restrictive class identity. Although the Marchioness's aristocratic position counters some effects of her disability (she has servants that act on her behalf at her command), her socioeconomic status, and to some extent her marital status, also

create significant social impositions that manifest themselves physically. Representing the restrictions imposed by behavioral norms for those of her class, two faculties that she normally possesses—namely, speaking and moving her arms—become temporarily disabled. When her servant Glòria addresses her with tears and kisses, the narrator reports, "La Marquesa volgué parlar" (700) ("The Marchioness wanted to speak"), but she cannot, which draws attention to the external (and presumably able-bodied) voice that mediates the telling of her story. The revelation of what prevents her from speaking is surprising, in that it is not a physical incapacity but a social one. The narrator explains: "D'una banda aquella mateix orgull de casta que la tiranitzava, i de l'altra son encongiment ofegador de verge vella, que no ha après d'estimar en sa joventut, li posaren un mos a la boca i li tallaren l'impuls d'allargar els braços." (700) ("On the one hand, that old aristocratic pride that tyrannized her, and on the other, the suffocating shyness of an old virgin who had not learned to love in her youth, put a bit in her mouth and reined in her impulse to stretch out her arms"). In this case, the effects of the Marchioness's disability are magnified by expectations about how unmarried aristocratic female bodies should act.[95] Her disability, then, comes to represent the embodied consequences of repressive social norms.

Along these lines, the Marchioness's gender deviance also becomes manifest through her physical disability. "Carnestoltes" employs cross-gendered references, almost always in negative terms, to describe the Marchioness, which reflects the broad social rejection of such

[95] This observation derives from Rosemarie Garland Thomson's theorization that, "Disability, then, is the attribution of corporeal deviance—not so much as a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do" (6). It should be noted that married aristocratic women, as their husbands' objects of spectacle and display, were subject to social expectations of their own.

transgressive bodies and behaviors.[96] Shunning both physical and behavioral conventions of femininity, the Marchioness has "trets de vell senador romà" (697) ("traits of an old Roman senator"). Furthermore, "la veu li sortí aspra i sense entonació com certes veus d'home" (700) ("her voice came out rough and without intonation like certain male voices"). While "proper" women choose either marriage or the convent, the Marchioness instead elects to spend time traveling, a pastime that reflects the metaphorical, gendered border crossing she performs (701-02). The narrator attributes the Marchioness's disability to a corporeal response to her nonconforming behavior, which shows how her paralysis becomes a punishment for gender deviance: "De aleshores en avall, sa naturalesa, que havia estat entera i ferma, com si de sobte es revengés dels passats dispendis d'activitat, anà traient gran floriment de xacres, de les quals fou la més cruel una paràlisi que li aturà les cames, amortallant amb elles la ferotge energia de la Marquesa" (702) ("From then onward, her constitution, which had been whole and sound, as if all of a sudden it avenged the past outlay of activity, began to release a great flourishing of afflictions, of which the cruelest was a paralysis that immobilized her legs, shrouding with them the Marchioness's ferocious energy"). In claiming both her autonomy and mobility, her paralysis serves to make her more dependent on others and conforms her body to behavioral expectations of women. In another instance, the narrator describes her personality in terms associated with masculinized femininity, or conventions of the twenty-first century butch,[97] affirming: "era una donzella forta, ardida, valerosa com una amazona guerrera" (701) ("She was a strong, angry woman, brave like an Amazon warrior"). Given that Català describes public perceptions of the

[96] Similar to "Carnestoltes," works by Català's Spanish contemporary, Carmen de Burgos (1867-1932) also negatively portray "masculine lesbians" and depict them as socially isolated, according to Lourdes Estrada López (152).
[97] On the figure of the butch and its relationship to what Jack Halberstam calls "lesbian masculinity," see: (Halberstam 119-120).

female writer in similar terms, it becomes clear that both the Marchioness and the female writer are seen as gender deviants and outcasts. In order not to be seen as a social threat, both must be confined by their bodies and their homes.

"Carnestoltes" puts forth a remedy to the Marchioness's paralysis and the resulting web of physical and emotional isolation through the experience of reciprocal homosocial desire. According to Samuel Amago, homosocial desire has served different ends in other modern, women-authored works of Peninsular literature. It provides a stable oasis in tumultuous environments in the case of Emilia Pardo Bazán's 1887 *La madre naturaleza* ("Form and Function" 61), and a display of resistance to heteronormative social structures in the case of Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945) ("Lesbian Desire" 66). In "Carnestoltes," homosocial desire serves to alleviate solitude and demonstrate the acceptance of one considered to be an Other. After one particularly sour interaction with the Marquesa, Glòria despondently and apologetically kisses her hands, an action that surpasses "tota llei d'encongiments i prejudicis" (700) ("all types of hesitations and prejudices") and prompts the Marchioness to reach out and hug her. On a literal level, the term *encongiment* means shrugging or shrinking away. On a metaphorical level, the term connotes shyness or reserve. In "Carnestoltes" the term takes on both meanings. It is first used to describe the physical limitations caused by the Marchioness's economic and emotional state. The narrative repetition of this term here functions to show how the display of mutual, homosocial affection between Glòria and the Marchioness vanquishes both physical and emotional restrictions. Furthermore, by referencing how their expression of love also overcomes prejudices, ostensibly held by the characters within the story, the narrator's description also anticipates and assuages the reading public's own questions about the propriety of this behavior.

The embrace, instigated by the Marchioness, also signifies an overcoming of the socially provoked paralysis that had previously kept her quiet, still, and alone. Paradoxically, it is this same isolation that allows an expression of mutual desire to occur. The narrator explains: "Les dues dones quedaren així soles gairebé en tota la casa, i aleshores, en la pau secreta de la intimitat, se sentiren felices sense dir-s'ho" (701) ("The two women remained like this, with almost the entire house to themselves, and then, in privacy's secret peace, they felt happy, without telling each other"). Without their aloneness, this expression would have remained impossible due to evident social restrictions. The isolated space allows for the transgressive gesture. Català, too, advocates for solitude in her prologues, proposing that those who criticize her work can respectfully leave her alone with it. The "room of one's own" for which Català's texts argue, then, is a space free of the threat of social disapproval.

For Glòria and the Marchioness, their hug symbolizes the transcendent experience of mutual understanding. The narrator reports, "[C]om si aquella abraçada hagués estat la revelació definitiva en deslligar-se sentiren, cada una d'elles, que l'altra li era necessària sobre la terra, com si de cop llurs dues vides incompletes s'haguessin fos i completat en una de sola" (700) ("As if that hug had been the definitive revelation, upon letting go they both felt as if the other was essential for them, as if all of a sudden their incomplete lives had melded together and become a single complete one"). The narrator emphasizes the effects of this embrace in terms that resemble the functions of recognition first discussed in chapter one in the context of Gaietà's storytelling in *Solitud*. Concretely, recognition reemerges in these stories as the two-fold ability to both identify and to positively value another person, place, or situation (Felski, *Uses* 47). In this way, the narrative representation of otherness met with recognition in "Carnestoltes" serves

as a model for othered narratives such as Català's, which also include dark themes, unruly vocabulary, and female authorship, to also be met with acceptance and valorization.

Narrative sequencing plays an important role in the reader's interpretation of the interaction between Glòria and the Marchioness by affirming that Glòria has caused the change in the Marchioness's condition. The narrator temporally situates Glòria's intervention: "En aquella època de dolors, d'enrunament i de desesperació irresignada, fou quan ella pogué conèixer la devoció de sa cambrera." (702) ("That time of pain, ruin, and resigned hopelessness was when she managed to see her servant's devotion"). Glòria counters some of the social conditions—particularly, the sense of isolation and marginalization—that contribute to the Marchioness's [emotional] paralysis. In contrast to the narrator's first description of the Marchioness's body as immobilized, taxidermic (or, in this case, mummified), paralyzed by physical ailments and rigid social norms, the narrator now begins to depict her in more human terms. After the Marchioness expresses her feelings toward Glòria, her body again takes on a symbolic function as it warms and softens from the inside out: "el cor de la Marquesa, quasi momificat i endurit en sos prejudicis i menyspreus de casta, acabà per entendrir-se i revifar-se per la màgica virtut d'aquell gran afecte" (702) ("the Marchioness's heart, nearly mummified and hardened in her class prejudices and disdain, finally softened and revived because of the magical virtue of that great affection"). The full recognition of her love for Glòria serves to liberate her even further: "son cor, llibert a la fi de les antigues prevencions que l'emmurallaven, sentia vivors caldes [...] li portava un goig i una fortalesa d'ànima desconeguts" (703) ("her heart, free at last from all of the old hesitations that walled it in, felt warmly spirited"). In contrast to the cold physical and emotional imprisonment of isolation, there is now a warm

togetherness. The Marchioness regains a sense of vitality through an experience of mutual, homosocial desire and recognition.

Given the potentially scandalous nature of this interaction, the narrator offers a long subjective aside in order to defend this encounter. The narrator's tone alternates between resoluteness and ambivalence as he proclaims:

> Estimava! Estimava amplament, fortament. A qui?… Què li importava el qui?… A un altre ésser com ella. No era l'objecte de l'amor lo més punyidor i interessant d'aquell miracle, sinó l'amor mateix, aquella gran afecció calda i serena, aquell afecte viu que la lligava a quelcom vivent i la treia de la buidor obaga, de l'isolament místic en què fins aleshores havia viscut. Per què lo que lliga i conhorta no és pas lo que dels altres ve a nosaltres, sinó lo que de nosaltres va generosament als altres, lo que donem, no lo que ens donen… (703)
>
> (She loved! She loved with fullness and strength. Whom?…Who cares about whom?… Another being like herself. The object of love was not the most striking or important about that miracle, but rather the love itself, that great warm and serene affection, that deep feeling that tied her to something living and took her out of the dark emptiness, out of the glum isolation in which she'd been living until then. Because what ties and comforts isn't what come from others to us, but what goes generously to others from ourselves, what we give, not what they give us).

The narrator's address serves to promote acceptance of the Marchioness's experience by proclaiming that the identity of the person she loved remains irrelevant, even though her feelings transgress norms of class and gender. In this way, the narrator advocates for privacy, as well as the broad possibilities for mutual love and understanding. However, the narrator's defense loses

some of its advocacy power by failing to make explicit that this expression of love occurs between two women, although this reference is patently clear to the reader. The resulting stance on what would have been a very polemical issue becomes softened; same-sex desire can be experienced insofar as it remains private and unspoken. The narrator's oscillation between offense and recoil resembles the directives found in Català's prologues, whose alternating tones (from sarcasm to sincerity) and messages (from discouragement to encouragement) send the reader in different directions at various points in her career. It is as if both Català and her narrators seek acceptance of marginalized subjects (people and themes), but with a discretion that appears as ambivalence, or vice versa.

This narrative ambivalence draws attention to the impossibility of acceptance of certain people and/or lifestyles. As in the works of her contemporaries, in "Carnestoltes" a tragic end for the deviant characters remains inevitable.[98] At the end of the story, the reader is brought back to the embodied manifestation of the Marchioness's disability when Glòria collapses and the Marchioness is physically unable to reach her:

> La cambrera es moria. Per la fredor que li glaçà el cor, la senyora va tenir-ne la certesa absoluta. […] [A]mb un impuls de totes ses forces aconseguí aixecar-se mig pam del seient de la butaca. "Filla meva!... Ja vinc!" cridà a la moribunda […] Mes, en el mateix punt, les forces la traïren i retombà pesadament a la butaca. […] L'ésser estimat moria allà, a tocar, i ella no podia dur-li socors o son petó de comiat. (705)
>
> (The servant was dying. Because of the cold that froze her heart, the Marchioness was absolutely convinced. […] [W]ith all of her strength, she managed to lift herself a few inches up out of her chair. "My child!...I'm coming!" she yelled to the moribund.[…]

[98] See: (Estrada López 155).

> But, at that same moment, her strength betrayed her and she fell, heavily, back into her chair. […] Her loved one was dying there, close enough to touch, and she couldn't come to her aid or give her a parting kiss.)

Because of a lack of strength in her arms, the Marchioness cannot move herself out of her wheelchair to offer any goodbye to her loved one. In yet another back and forth between disability-as-lived-experience and disability-as-metaphor, her paralysis causes both physical and emotional repercussions. The tragic end underscores the brevity of the Marchioness's experience of social recognition and points to the return of her isolation. It also reaffirms the Marchioness's marginality by impeding any sense of closure amidst her grief, a distinctively dehumanizing act.

The portrayal of disability, gender deviance, and same-sex desire in "Carnestoltes" contributes to Català's methods of literary reception in several ways. By bringing these issues to the center of the story, "Carnestoltes" serves to encourage acknowledgement of physical, structural, and symbolic causes of Otherness. Through the Marchioness's poignant relationship with Glòria, the story exemplifies Català's theory that "també n'hi de sol en aquestes visions [ombrívoles]" (558) ("there is also light in these [shadowy] visions"). In response to critics such as Maragall who assert that gratuitous representations of misfortune impede a sympathetic reader response, "Carnestoltes" shows that marginalization, which the Marchioness embodies, need not be met with disgust or rejection. Rather, it can be met with recognition and empathy. The story's tragic end accurately depicts the still-limited tolerance of contemporary society, which remains hard-pressed to accept women writers, let alone masculine women, lesbian relationships, or disabled bodies. At a time when aesthetic value is entwined with ostensibly "redemptive" and

didactic qualities, especially in texts by female authors,[99] "Carnestoltes" models that stories of an Other need not preclude literary merit.

In contrast to "Carnestoltes," which centers on a relationship between women, the second short story that this chapter analyzes, "L'altra vida," brings to the fore a relationship between men. In "L'altra vida," an uninspired urbanite narrates in the first person his summer vacations in a small fishing village. To assuage his boredom, a local doctor introduces this unnamed narrator to an aging fisherman, Pere Joan. When the narrator speaks to the doctor about Pere Joan's apparently simple—inexpressive, even—existence, though, he finds that his conclusions are misguided. The doctor explains that Pere Joan's life is marked by a severe and disabling condition,[100] in addition to "un estrany fenomen d'inversió..." (855) ("a strange phenomenon of inversion"), the term that turn-of-the-century diagnosticians used to refer to homosexuality (Halberstam 76). Pere Joan's psycho-sexual difference again functions as a narrative prosthesis, piquing the narrator's interest. The two men develop a deep affection that grows throughout several summer visits. However, just as for the Marchioness and Glòria, their encounters will come to an abrupt and tragic end. In an uncontrollable and violent expression of his mental disability, Pere Joan accidentally kills his wife, the chief representative of heteronormative sexuality. When police seek to prosecute Pere Joan, the narrator and the doctor both come to his defense by underscoring his humanity rather than his criminality, demonstrating recognition of

[99] See: (Sánchez-Llama 193).

[100] The story speaks only of the symptoms of Pere Joan's disability—including hallucinations and delusions—but avoids offering any diagnosis. Given the problematic "science" of identifying disease that is depicted in other texts, such as "L'Embruix" (analyzed in chapter 3), the choice not to diagnose Pere Joan is significant. It serves to free him from erroneous assumptions about the terms of his condition and the artificial boundaries they could set.

his marginalized condition. Ultimately, this defense proves irrelevant, as Pere Joan dies of grief and guilt shortly after. For his part, the narrator never again returns to his summer idyll.

Pere Joan's existence is marked by spatial, social, and psychological alterity. The title of "L'altra vida" ("The Other Life") draws attention to the idea that lives and identities exist in plural and othered forms. According to Francesca Bartrina, the plurality stems from the tension between Pere Joan's exterior and interior experiences (154), which is to say the disparity between an apparently calm life and a highly activated mental state that leads to violent dreams and hallucinations. In order to separate himself from those whom he could potentially harm, the fisherman lives outside of town on a sparsely populated road facing the sea, his spatial distance from local residents symbolizing the psychological distance that his mental disability causes. The narrator, though, does not yet know why Pere Joan lives his life physically and socially removed from the community. As a result, he offers a simplified and even romanticized explantion of Pere Joan's fraught existence, reporting that Pere Joan spends his days "De casa al llagut, del llagut a casa" (854) ("From the house to the boat, from the boat to the house").

Aside from the symbolic (and practical) positioning of Pere Joan's residence, Pere Joan's home itself also serves metaphorical ends. Similar to how the Marchioness's dungeonous abode in "Carnestoltes" mirrors her feeling of physical imprisonment, Pere Joan's bizarrely painted home magnifies the reader's sense of his peculiar nature (848). After noticing the house painted in random patches of color, the narrator speaks with Doctor Pelegrí, a figure whose job title grants him a voice of authority. In a statement that foreshadows his later defense of Pere Joan's character, Doctor Pelegrí references Pere Joan's eclectic style in order to justify his artistic choices:

> Vostès, els ciutadans—perdona que l'hi digui—, tot ho compliquen a gratcient. Aquest espeternec de colors és la cosa més natural del món. Avui són groc, blau i verd, eh? Doncs, potser si torna […] trobarà que s'han tornat roig, negre i cendra o qualsevulla altra combinació semifunerària, sense que el sentit del color hi tingui res a dir. (848)
>
> (You city slickers—pardon the term—know full well that you complicate everything. These sparks of colors are the most natural things in the world. Today they are yellow, blue and green, right? Well, maybe if you come back […] you'll find that they have turned red, black, and gray or whatever other semi-funerary combination, without the combination of colors meaning anything in particular.)

Pelegrí defends Pere Joan's independently minded artistic creation in a way that recalls Català's earlier novel, *Un film (3.000 metres)*. Just as Nonat's tinkering with the stolen bike in *Un film* (as examined in chapter two) represents Català's resistance to *noucentista* ideals of form and function, this short story again defends other unusual artistic creations. The haphazard colors of the house illustrate Pere Joan's resistance to conventions that a well-painted house must be of only one color. The doctor's allusions to "babaus ciutadans" (849) ("city dolts") shows that city folk (a reference to urban Catalan cultural reformers) are not omniscient, despite their notable sway in matters concerning "high" and "low" culture. Indeed, the *babaus ciutadans*' rigid way of seeing things serves as an impediment to appreciating other logical methods of problem solving, such as the way Pere Joan uses paint in the quantities and colors he has in order to avoid waste. Doctor Pelegrí's defense of a marginalized character who employs available tools rather than throwing them out in favor of what seems more appropriate to others functions as a metaphor for how Català, othered in her own right, defends the value of the rural language and stories that are

available to her rather than assuming the natural preeminence of tidy urbane tales.[101] In this way, Català's methods of creation and reception end up entwined. The doctor's response to Pere Joan's house/artwork models a methods of creation that respects his artistic liberties and a methods of reception that recognizes his difference as interesting and enriching.

Pere Joan's ever-evolving residence also draws attention to his fluid identity. This mutable identity comes into greater focus in the narrator's later characterization of his life, "que no sembla talment vida d'home, sinó que porta a la memòria la rudimentària d'aqueixes obscures espècies marines intermitges que participen de l'animal i del vegetal" (854-55) ("which does not seem like the life of a man, but rather it brings to memory the primitiveness of those in-between dark ocean creatures that are part animal, part plant"). Similar to the narrator's treatment of the Marchioness in "Carnestoltes," the narrator's description initially dehumanizes Pere Joan. By comparing him to sea creatures that are neither fully plant nor fully animal, the narrator situates him in a liminal space that reflects his Othered condition. This positioning suggests that there is something "in between" about Pere Joan. In the context of this story, this in-betweenness may refer to his sexuality in that he is married to a woman, but later becomes the romantic partner of a man, or his complicated mental state, which leads to unpredictable behavior.

As in "Carnestoltes," the story presents the marginalized person along with his or her environment before exploring her or his disability. According to Mitchell and Snyder, this sequencing justifies the storytelling process by capitalizing on how exceptional subjects produce narrative interest (54). In a similar vein, Michael Berubé asserts: "disability […] demands a story" (571). One detects a tinge of fatigue on the part of these contemporary disability studies critics in relation to the recourse to disability to motivate and propel literary narrative, which

[101] See "Pòrtic," the prologue of *Caires Vius* (examined in chapter two) for Català's defense of Catalan *ruralisme*.

"L'altra vida" and "Carnestoltes" certainly do. For instance, Doctor Pelegrí, after explaining Pere Joan's "inversion," tells the narrator: "Ah, ah! Confessi que està encuriosit!" (855) ("Aha! Confess that you are curious!") before explaining Pere Joan's history in more detail. Nonetheless, the depiction of disability and marginality in this work not only motivates storytelling, but also functions to bring into view what the urban Catalan literati neglected to see or failed to understand, as reflected in the doctor's statement: "Que curt i fallidor és el pobre judici humà! No és estrany que fem tants disbarats en aquest món!" (855) ("How poor and faulty is human judgment! No wonder there is so much nonsense in this world!"). In response to shortsighted judgments that stem from the failure to grasp an issue, such as Pere Joan's seemingly simple behavior or the peculiar colors of his house, "L'altra vida" puts forth a model of reception that is based on understanding the whole story, even when it may be uncomfortable.

As a response to the narrator's misguided interpretation of Pere Joan's behavior, the Doctor again serves as the voice of reason. Addressing the narrator, the doctor asserts:

> Ell una vida embrionària, apagada, insensible? Al contrari: la seva és una vida plena, sotraquejada, gairebé tumultuosa. Millor dit: és una vida doble, o si vol, partida en dos corrents que llisquen paral·lels, però amb color i densitat diverses. Amb més exactitud, és una farola que projecta alternativament esclats de claror enlluernadora i faixes d'ombra espessa. (855)
>
> (His an embryonic, dull, insensitive life? On the contrary: his is a full life, rattled, almost tumultuous. Better yet: it is a double life, or if you prefer, split into two currents, that glide past one another in parallel, but with different color and density. To be more precise, it's a streetlight that alternatively puts off bursts of blinding brightness and bands of dense darkness).

The chromatic description of Pere Joan's life in terms of *claror* and *ombra* reflects his changing mental states, just as the dynamic coloration of Pere Joan's house draws attention to the plurality and fluidity of his character. Doctor Pelegrí contests the narrator's assumptions that Pere Joan is an inchoate or apathetic person. For the doctor, Pere Joan's differences do not preclude his capacity to experience life richly and fully. The doctor's response not only corrects the narrator, but also re-humanizes Pere Joan despite his mental disability.

That Català also describes the thematic choices of her literary work in terms of light and shadow supports an interpretation of "L'altra vida" as a model for the response to the perceived otherness of both the artist and her creations. In the prologue "Als llegidors" ("To the readers") Català explains: "El cor humà és com una casa a quatre vents: per tres hi dóna ara el sol, ara a l'ombra, però el quart està reservat a l'ombra exclusivament [...] Jo, quan vaig començar de guaitar a través de mon cor les coses del món, vaig ensopegar-me a fer-ho per la quarta banda." (559) ("The human heart is like a house with four sides: three are in the sun now, the shade later, but the fourth is reserved just for the shade […]. When I began looking at the things of the world through my heart, I found myself doing it from the fourth side.") Català defends shadowy literary works, refuting those who think that only positive—or "bright" —literature can be considered good or beneficial. Her prologue works to shift the readers' expectations and evaluations, just as Doctor Pelegrí tries to steer the under-informed opinion of the city guy who thinks he will grasp everything at first sight.

In this sense, both Català and Doctor Pelegrí intervene in the reception of the stories they tell. The central narrative project of "L'altra vida" is the mediation between "life" and "The Other Life." As Mitchell and Snyder argue, the representation of disability brings into view "that which is believed to be off the map of 'recognizable' human experiences" and thereby bridges

separate worlds (5-6). Along these lines, Català's story becomes endowed with the ability to do what other stories could not or would not do by representing the othered and the *ombra*. When the protagonist, such as the Marchioness or Pere Joan, cannot offer their own version,[102] mediated storytelling becomes an adequate second option. However, this method also demonstrates certain shortcomings, in that the one who desires to be a speaking subject still does not have an audible (or public) voice.

Mediation, though, is only one part of the remedy that this story proposes. Just as in "Carnestoltes," the experience of mutual desire, which exemplifies an understanding of or empathy for another, also profoundly counters one's sense of isolation and otherness. As previously mentioned, the Doctor makes clear that Pere Joan demonstrates a so-called inversion, which serves to compound the sense of isolation he experiences due to his mental disability. However, upon a closer look, the narrator himself is also isolated, though due to boredom rather than disability. The narrator emerges as another "othered" figure by demonstrating traits indicative of non-heteronormative gender and sexuality. For instance, the narrator proclaims his homosocial attraction by affirming: "decididament, el doctor Pelegrí era lo més atraient del poble" ("Doctor Pelegrí was decidedly the most attractive thing in town") (847). He is repeatedly described in feminized terms; he does not like to hunt (846); he is a "noi de la mare" (847) ("momma's boy"), and he is also somewhat vain and self-satisfied (852).

As the story develops, it becomes increasingly clear that the narrator and Pere Joan counter their alterity through the development of a relationship, which, similar to that between the Marchioness and Glòria in "Carnestoltes," is marked between physical embraces, silence,

[102] Similar to the Marchioness, Pere Joan also becomes tongue-tied and unable to express himself: "Volgué seguir explicant-se i no pogué traure la veu" (861) ("He wanted to continue to explain himself, but he couldn't utter a word").

privacy, and certain expressions of ambivalence. The romantic nature of their relationship is revealed (in part) by the narrator's use of erotically charged language to describe their Doctor-prescribed evening naps, which they take "dins de les coves gemades, ajaçats de tota nostra llargada al fons del llagut fondejat, que ens bressava voluptuosament en la mitja llum verdosa" (851) ("inside the radiant coves, laying side by side in the anchored boat, which rocked us voluptuously under the sliver of emerald moon"). In what seems a half-hearted attempt to evade detection of their same-sex relationship, the narrator's descriptions often employ sensual language that remains just short of direct. For instance, the narrator explains how his interactions with Pere Joan have changed and grown closer over the course of their relationship in terms that vacillate between love and friendship:

> Sols que ara En Pere Joan no hi permaneixia d'ajocat en veure'm, com el primer dia, sinó que s'aixecava amatent i m'allargava amb tosc afecte aquelles mans ronyoses, totes clapades de salobre, que jo estrenyia amb força, fent uns extrems que sens dubte haurien encès la guspireta irònica, si els hagués arribat a escallimpar, en els ulls burletes del doctor Pelegrí. I és que En Pere Joan Buixeu i jo ens estimàvem; ens estimàvem de bo de bo. El nostre tracte ja no era el de mútua conveniència, sinó el d'una estreta amistat. (859)
>
> (Only now Pere Joan didn't stay lying down when he saw me, like the first day, but rather he happily stood up and reached out with that rough affection those dirty salt-caked hands, which I grasped firmly, going to such extremes that it would have doubtless lit sparks of irony, if the Doctor's teasing eyes had caught a glance. And it's just that Pere Joan Buixeu and I loved each other, truly, truly loved each other. Our attitude was no longer one of mutual agreeability, but of close friendship).

As with the Marchioness and Glòria, it is clear that the narrator and Pere Joan enjoy a satisfying mutual affection. The interchangeable use of terms of love and friendship complicates the reader's ability to categorize—and perhaps also, to condemn—the relationship. In this way, Català's stories represent marginalized subjects on a spectrum that ranges from open to discreet, which reflects the relative taboo-ness of certain topics. For their part, disability and gender deviance emerge as less unmentionable, while same-sex desire remains more forbidden.

As in "Carnestoltes," it is not yet possible to permanently or openly inhabit this othered realm of same-sex desire. The idyll ends when Pere Joan dreams that he is being robbed and stops the perpetrator by strangling him, only to regain consciousness and realize that he had been hallucinating. Pere Joan had not strangled a thief, but rather his wife. In response to this tragic event, the story does not argue for his innocence, but rather for his being undeserving of punishment. The authoritative voice of the Doctor proclaims: "Que no ho sap tothom el que ha passat, i no veieu aquest quadro? […] Què llei ni què raves fregits! […] Jo prohibeixo que es turmenti aquest desventurat...Me'l mataríeu en un no-res" (862) ("Doesn't everyone know what happened, and don't you see this picture? […] No poppycock about laws! […] I prohibit you from tormenting this poor soul…You'd kill him in an instant). By using the figure of a doctor that accepts and defends Pere Joan, Català mimics contemporary anti-conservative medical discourses.[103] The story's ending suggests that deviant conduct need not always be publicly sanctioned.

[103] At the turn of the twentieth century, the Spanish physician Félix Martí Ibáñez considered inversion as form of homosexuality that should not necessarily be morally condemned or have legal consequences "dada su etiología patológica y, por ende, su inevitabilidad" (Cleminson 188). On the other hand, voluntary homosexuality, referred to as "perversion," was still denounced (Cleminson 188).

Physical and mental deviants in "Carnestoltes" and "L'altra vida" evade the moral condemnation found in other works of Català's time, while also conforming to the stereotypical narrative that their futures are inherently ill-fated. Novels penned by two of Català's Spanish male contemporaries endorse, according to Jeffrey Zamostny, "a nominally liberal call for conditional compassion for inverts on the ultimately homophobic ground that they are not sinners or criminals but errors of Nature deserving of pity so long as they seek to remedy their flaws" (234). Unlike acceptance in these novels, which remains contingent on reformed (and chaste) behavior, Català's short stories allow for homosocial relationships, albeit temporary ones. Both the Marchioness and Pere Joan receive and are positively transformed by the touch of their lover. These stories also call into question the need for a "cure" or remedy to the protagonists' conditions and behavior. For instance, Doctor Pelegrí explains that treating Pere Joan with "bromurats" (857) ("bromides") and "pocions sedants de tota mena" (857) ("all sorts of sedative potions") in an attempt to inhibit his behavior "era com travar un cavall salvatge, com embenar i immobilitzar un membre en sanitat" (857) ("was like bridling a wild horse, like bandaging and immobilizing a healthy extremity"). His description shows that Pere Joan's differences do not need correction, but rather acceptance, just as the narrator of "Carnestoltes" emphasizes the underlying humanity of the Marchioness's relationship by affirming that she loved "un altre ésser com ella" (703) ("another being like herself").

Nonetheless, in alignment with other disability narratives that conclude with "the extermination of the deviant" (Mitchell and Snyder 54), both of these short stories end in death—Glòria's in "Carnestoltes" and Pere Joan's in "L'altra vida." Although this narrative ending usually marks "a purification of the social body," according to Mitchell and Snyder (54), given the repeated defense of Pere Joan's difference throughout the story, his death arouses sympathy.

Rather than feeling relief at the elimination of something that does not belong, the reader senses a lack of something that should be present.

Returning to Català's image of a four-sided house, with three sides in the sun and one in the shade, it now becomes clear that the removal of the shaded side does not make the house brighter and more perfect, but rather, it deforms and denatures the house. The house is only a house because all four sides are present, light and dark. Just as her prologues defend the representation of "l'ombra"/an othered literary category, her short stories vindicate outcasts by depicting a coming to terms with them. Ultimately, though, the full integration of the Other remains hindered, both for these characters and for female writers in Català's time. These works begin to construct a model of literary reception that lays the groundwork for the growth of a more diverse literary society that, although not fully realized in her lifetime, may come to fruition for generations of women authors to follow.

CONCLUSION: LOOKING AT A LITERARY LEGACY THROUGH CRITICAL BINOCULARS

> "Works of art are not just objects to be interpreted; they also serve as frameworks and guides to interpretation."
> (Felski, *Limits* 168)

In an early twentieth-century literary environment dominated by male writers, male critics, and male publishers, Català is a pioneer, and even more so in Catalunya's still-emerging writing culture. Although she was not the first female Catalan novelist—a distinction that goes to Dolors Montserdà—Català is the first to gain a national and international presence through early translations and published reviews of her works. Additionally, in 1923, when Català becomes the first female member of the *Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres*, she acknowledges this groundbreaking role in her acceptance speech. Expressing humility alongside a carefully phrased call to action, she states, "[…] vinc a comprendre que l'alt honor que se'm dispensa, no es un premi a mereixements personals, sinó una mostra de consideració i un estímul a les dones catalanes que s'ocupen i preocupen dels negocis de l'esperit" ("Discurs" 1657-58) ("I've come to understand that the high honor granted me is not a prize of personal merits, but rather a show of consideration and encouragement to Catalan women who occupy and preoccupy themselves with matters of the spirit"). Though many notable Catalan women published critically and commercially successful literature in the decades to follow, most notably Mercè Rodoreda, Català remained the only female Academy member until the induction of Francesca Vendrell Gallostra in 1984—and one of only nine women of the 565 members inducted between 1700 and 2018 ("Reial Acadèmia"). In this way, Català's admittance into the *Acadèmia* lays bare the

ongoing gender-based disparities in an institution that fashions and promotes literary prestige, while also affirming her significance to Catalan literary history.

The material construction of Català's literary legacy begins to take place decades after her admittance to the Academy. In the late 1940s and 1950s, correspondence between Català and her publishers and editors references the reprinting of her earlier works, the release of her first *Obres completes* (*Complete Works*), and the appearance of her stories in both Catalan and Spanish anthologies.[104] The confluence of publications cited in these letters demonstrates both the lasting demand for Català's texts and her rise to canonicity within her own lifetime. (The missives, aside from illustrating editorial transactions, also provide a wealth of evidence that women remain largely absent from the editorial side of the publishing industry in those years and many to follow.[105]) Other correspondence addresses the production of Català's final short story collection *Jubileu* (*Jubilee*) (1951), a work whose title explicitly commemorates her fifty-year

[104] Josep Miracle cites the republication of *Ombrívoles* in a 1948 letter and that of a seventh edition of *Solitud* in a 1959 missive ("395. Josep Miracle" 449; "437. Josep Miracle" 492). In a 1951 letter, Miracle notes Català's inclusion in the [Catalan-language] *Antologia de Contistes Catalans* (*Anthology of Catalan Storytellers*) ("411. Josep Miracle" 466). Similarly, Javier Lasso de la Vega Jiménez-Placer's 1959 letter references Català's presence in the [Spanish-language] *Antología de Cuentos Contemporáneos* ("458. Javier Lasso" 515). In 1946, Josep Maria Cruzet proclaims that it pleases him to include "en el meu pla editorial, les 'Obres completes' de tots els grans escriptors catalans, i molt especialment les de vostè" ("391. Josep Maria" 445) ("in my publishing plan, the 'Complete Works' of all the great Catalan writers, and very especially, yours"). On the occasion of the republication of *Drames rurals* in 1948, Cruzet again writes to Català, reiterating her literary acclaim and explains that the collection marks number forty "de la meva Biblioteca Selecta en la que dono els títols més destacats dels nostres autors cabdals" ("394. Josep Maria" 447) ("of my Select Library in which I present the most exceptional titles of our leading authors"). In both letters, notwithstanding Cruzet's self-congratulatory tone, Català figures among a list of esteemed Catalan authors.

[105] Although the number and the reputation of female authors is growing, men remain in charge of the principal paths to cultural prestige via their work as publishers and their self-appointed role as literary canonizers. Lola Beccaria affirms that this pattern continue through the 1990s (qtd. in Henseler 12).

writing anniversary and points to her retirement.[106] Aside from the publication—and republication—of Català's works, the 1953 establishment of the *Premi Víctor Català* (Víctor Català Prize) for short stories further situates the author as a point of reference for Catalan writers. Taken together, these measures signal that Català is no longer a relative newcomer on the Catalan literary scene nor is she the amateur she often claims to be. Instead, Català's position becomes that of [Catalan] literary matriarch.

The 1948 prologue to a re-edition of Català's short story collection *Ombrívoles* (*Somber Shades*) coincides with this shift in Català's professional role. This prologue, titled "Les Ulleres" ("Glasses"), has two primary functions: first, it illustrates Català's reflections on the role of time in relation to the evolving evaluations of literary works; second, it serves to ask what will change when her texts are re-read as so-called classics, rather than as contemporary fiction. In her own time, Català is read more than once as a belated naturalist, as a writer whose works were good but out of vogue.[107] "Les Ulleres," though, acknowledges that works of literature enjoy a prolonged critical afterlife not for their trendiness, but rather for their capacity to continue to speak to different audiences over time. In this text, Català uses visual and spatial metaphors to represent how time produces critical distance in the work of literary interpretation. As a result, modern readers rely on "ulleres de llarga vista" (559) ("binoculars") to examine texts from another era. These spectacles, however, do not necessarily improve or clarify one's observations. According to Català, their most reliable effect is to change them. The author asserts that these *ulleres* can weaken, strengthen, complement, subtract, and/or transform "les facultats normals" ("Les Ulleres" 559) ("normal faculties"). The implication is that the passage of time may allow

[106] See: (Català, "408. Caterina Albert" 463).

[107] See: (Oliver 358; Perés "Dramas" 293).

for a more, or less, accurate perception of past texts. Indeed, Català's future critics may offer beneficial new perspectives. As Català once suggested in "Pòrtic," though, it is also possible that her readers will remain not "seriosament adestrada per a judicar" (602) ("seriously qualified to judge").

As "Les Ulleres" continues, Català develops her theory of post factum critical analysis by combining visual and corporeal symbolism. She asserts that literary trends of yesteryear served to cover her work with glitzy garments (558)—or perhaps ideological shrouds. Yet, when peered at through the lens of time, Català's work will no longer be "púdicament velat" ("Les Ulleres" 558) ("chastely veiled"), but rather "nuet de cap a peus" ("Les Ulleres" 558) ("nude from head to toe"). Here, Català likens her own body of work to a human body at which her readers gaze, which recalls the language of the critics who had so often read her works as the product of an assumed-to-be deviant body. However, Català inverts their scheme. Her prologue redirects attention from the author as the embodied subject of [irrelevant] critical inspection by asserting that her narrative work is the body to be examined. Català ultimately invites future readers to engage with her work and forecasts that her literary legacy will shift over time. She asks: "Què hi veurà, en ell, de vigència absolvible o de tara anacrònica condemnable, quan a tan considerable distància l'enfoqui amb les ulleres de llarga vista?" ("Les Ulleres" 558) ("What of defensible validity or of condemnable anachronistic defects will be seen in it, when it is brought into focus with binoculars at such a considerable distance?").

This dissertation has proposed one answer to Català's question: concretely, that the author's oeuvre foregrounds the construction of extensive and coherent methods of writing and reading. As cited in the epigraph to this conclusion, works of literature intrinsically possess "frameworks and guides" to their own interpretation (Felski, *Limits* 168). Català's texts indeed

direct their own interpretation and explain their own creation in ways that respond to, debate, and, as "Ulleres" shows, even anticipate critical readings. As I have argued throughout the previous four chapters, an array of Català's writings—from her novels *Solitud* and *Un film (3.000 metres)*, to her short stories "L'Embruix," "Carnestoltes," and "L'altra vida," to her prologues, personal letters, and a postscript—serve to outline a "how-to" of critical and lay reading and writing. These works evince Català's profound understanding of the professional and cultural contexts in which she is immersed, both in terms of the aesthetic preferences that they promote and the gendered assumptions that they uphold. This understanding forms the basis for her active response to (and repudiation of) the artistic and gender-based limitations that she experienced.

Català's writing methods, in their clear demarcation of appropriate critical boundaries and their insistence on authorial—and professional—autonomy for herself as a female author, served important ends in her own time and also remain relevant today. While there have been many social, cultural, and economic advances towards gender equality over the past century, today's public figures—including politicians, journalists, and literary critics—still struggle to describe and/or evaluate the work of professional women without reverting to some of the century-old tropes studied here. For instance, the hullabaloo surrounding the need to "unmask" the award-winning Italian writer Elena Ferrante included insinuations that the author's secret identity—not her works' merits—drove publicity (Gatti).[108] The parallel with Català's case is striking; in 1905, critic R.D. Perés claimed that the reason the author had sold so many books was due to the mystery surrounding her name: "Si *Víctor Català* hubiera sido un hombre, y un hombre sin leyenda previa y sin misterio, yo, que veo las cosas de cerca y he oído las

[108] See also: (Schwartz).

conversaciones de la gente del oficio y de los aficionados, puedo afirmar que no se hubieran hecho tan rápidamente dos ediciones de su libro, aunque la crítica lo recibiera con el aprecio que merece" ("Solitut" 563). Like the Italian journalist Claudio Gatti, Péres does not deny the critical merit of her works. Nonetheless, both Gatti and Péres identify an ulterior motive for the authors' commercial triumph, which diminishes the material success of their novels. Gatti also suggests that Ferrante's novels might be the product of "unofficial collaboration with her husband." In a similar way, Gabriel Ferrater's public lecture on Català implies that *Solitud*'s *rondalles* (folk stories) must originate from some other source, not the author herself. He states, "Les rondalles són generalment molt fantàstiques i m'agradaria saber d'on se les havia tret Caterina Albert […]" (Ferrater 78) ("The folk stories are generally fantasy-laden and I would like to know where Caterina Albert got them […]") In both cases, these men read women-authored works as not-totally-women-authored works, reinforcing the myth that women do not create literature in a way that is fully autonomous or fully original.

Beyond the literary world, there remains work to be done in order to achieve equitable treatment and representative presence of women in other twenty first-century cultural, academic, and professional environments. *The New York Times* recently revealed that, since 1851, just over twenty percent of those featured in their obituaries were women, a concrete measure of one way in which the contributions of women have been obscured by editorial decisions, patriarchal attitudes, and/or the passage of time (Padnani and Bennett). One wonders if the Spanish and Catalan presses will come to a similar ethical reckoning. Along a similar vein, the economist Erin Hengel's research showed that while women academics in her field write better, they are given less credit than men and, ultimately, are published less frequently and after longer review (2). And while women in the Spanish film industry are being awarded for their contributions,

they work with an average budget of €820,000 less than their male counterparts (Cuenca Suárez 28). For women involved in American filmmaking, economic concerns have recently been overshadowed by other issues. Beginning in fall 2017, investigations centering on film mogul Harvey Weinstein have drawn attention to the discriminatory, violent, and/or demeaning treatment of women actors and launched the hashtag heard 'round the world, #MeToo. These cases represent a small selection of many possible contemporary examples that underscore that gender equality in the twenty-first century remains an ideal rather than a "mission accomplished."

Although it might be an overstatement to suggest that reading Català could provide a solution to these issues, her self-advocacy and multivalent critique of apparatuses of control throughout her career indeed become newly revealing today. As this dissertation has demonstrated, her texts—and their reception—usefully illustrate the position of women authors in society and in institutions of cultural prestige during the first decades of the twentieth century. They also representatively demonstrate gendered practices of literary criticism and authorial responses thereto. While this research builds on previous studies of the allegories, symbols, and models of literary creation and reception in texts by early twentieth century Hispanic women writers, including Delmira Agustini and Alfonsina Storni, additional work is needed to connect, compare, and interpret the writing methods used across a broad network of Hispanic women writers. Future studies might also investigate the ways in which contemporary Hispanic women authors are currently discussed in both mass-market periodicals and literary journals in order to understand what gendered assumptions color approaches to women and their works at the present time. The work for gender equality, ultimately, is not solely a literary endeavor or a personal one. It must be accompanied by comprehensive action to ensure that women—writers

and others—are evaluated in ways that omit irrelevant information about their bodies, gender expression, or sexuality; that they are appropriately credited for their work; and finally, that they are treated with professionalism. To explain why and how this work should be done, one can turn to the trailblazing writing methods of Víctor Català.

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